

Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 05

Zifu Disciple

I Eat Tomatoes

(我吃西红柿)

Story Description:

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the multiverse was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller... than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 1: Kill! Kill! Kill!

“He cannot be permitted to leave this place alive!” Those six lavishly dressed men and women began to shout as well. They knew very well that with their formation broken and with the protective, hiding shroud which it had given them gone, they would quickly be discovered...and once Ji Ning escaped, the news would quickly spread and they would immediately be found.

They had to capture back the formation flag to this bewildering formation! Ji Ning had to be executed as well!

“Kill!”

“Kill him!” A large number of servants charged wildly towards Ji Ning as well.

Ning immediately stored the formation flag into his storage-type magic treasure, while at the same time, the wing-type magic treasures on his back immediately activated as he rushed outwards. At the same time, a boundless amount of scorching fire immediately descended, which surrounded those servants and began to burn them, causing the servants to all scream in agony.

Sou! Sou! Sou! Three figures from within the group of servants came pouncing out towards Ning.

“Xiantian lifeforms?” Ning immediately recognized that all three of them were Xiantian lifeforms. “It seems this despicable Immortal practitioner has quite a few Xiantian lifeforms under his control.”

“Kill him.”

“The Master has given the order to kill him.”

These three Xiantian lifeforms were filled with murderous intent. They were all servants of Bei Zishan who were controlled through poisons. They didn't dare to disobey the orders of Bei Zishan's orders. Immediately, they transformed into rays of light, streaking from different directions to attack Ning, but Ning simply used his Windwing Evasion technique to move

forward and directly clash with one of them, a fat-headed, big-eared, bearded man.

“Raaaawr!” The big fellow was wielding a large hammer.

Xiu!

A sword light flashed, and the big fellow rolled to the ground, falling down while clutching his chest, blood staining the ground. In but a single exchange, Ning’s sword had pierced through his heart!

“Little baby.” A hawk-nosed man roared angrily as he charged forward, and as he did, a flash of sword light chopped half his head off, and he died on the spot. The third Xiantian lifeform, an older man, was so terrified, his face changed and he immediately retreated.

Boundless amounts of flame descended, and two Xiantian lifeforms had been killed in an instant as well. The third had been so terrified, he had immediately retreated. This caused those six men and women to stare at each other, the looks on their faces unpleasant.

“What terrifying speed!”

“His swordplay is far superior to any of us. No wonder he was able to kill our senior fellow apprentice.”

All of them understand that even if they all charged together, the result would most likely be that single same word; ‘death’.

Right now, Ning was like a life-taking god of death. On one side, boundless amounts of fire scorched those servants, while on his side, he had slaughtered those Xiantian lifeforms. All together, the servants, spirit-beasts, and disciples of Bei Zishan totaled more than ten Xiantian lifeforms.

“Flood Dragon Dao-Soldiers!” The youngest of the six, that handsome youth, suddenly let out a fierce howl.

“Flood Dragon Dao-Soldiers.”

The other five fellow apprentices immediately understood. All of them

shouted furiously, while at the same time, their bodies quickly became covered with a layer of black armor. The six of them were now all garbed in the same black armor.

“Honglonglong...” For a moment, the entire mountain seemed to tremble. This great mountain had actually been hollowed out long ago. Aside from the primary place midway up the mountain, there had been a large number of smaller caverns dug out as well. After all, more than a million commoners were being tortured here. From this number, one could imagine how many caves had been created to hold them.

Sou! Sou! Sou! Sou! Sou! Sou! Like raindrops falling from the skies in a dense cluster, from each mountain cave flew out one deep green armored Dao-Soldier after another. Each Dao-Soldier was covered with complicated, ancient runes which drew upon the energy of the world.

“Dao-Soldiers!” Ning’s face changed. He watched as from afar, a large number of soldiers emerged from the hundreds of caves in the mountain. He immediately recognized them for Dao-Soldiers!

“In addition, these are even more powerful Dao-Soldiers than the ‘Crimson Guard’ of my Ji clan.” Given his experience, Ning naturally could sense the power of those runes on these Dao-Soldier’s armor, causing him to be all the more surprised.

More than ten thousand Dao-Soldiers descended from the skies.

And there were more than ten black armored Xiantian lifeform Dao-Soldiers as well, all charging forward.

“Kill. Kill as many as I can.” Ning understood that he definitely couldn’t let them join forces. He immediately swept out with his wings, moving like a giant Roc towards a location a kilometer away. These Dao-Soldiers were virtually all at the Houtian level, and thus were much faster.

“All of you, die!”

Ji Ning, his face spotted red thanks to the poison, had gone completely insane. In an instant, an enormous amount of celestial fire and boundless amounts of freezing frost descended from the skies, wildly sweeping out in

each direction. Ning was currently exhausting all of his power to control water and fire.

“Careful.”

“Assemble the formation!”

Of the more than ten thousand Dao-Soldiers, every nine of them linked up, summoning forth the power of the natural world. Faintly, behind their bodies, the illusion of a dragon appeared. Faced with the attack of that scorching flame and freezing frost, most of those who had linked up just barely managed to withstand the attack, while those who had not instantly lost their lives, especially those who were at the center of the flames and of the frost. The surges of heat and cold intersected, causing even those who had linked up to lose their lives.

“Grand Flood Dragon Formation!”

The ten-plus black-armored Xiantian lifeforms wanted to charge together in formation as well.

“Not good.” In the underwater estate, Ning had seen nine Xiantian lifeforms using Dao-Soldier armors. How could he just stand by idly and permit these ten or so people to do as they pleased?

“Fire-Water Lotus, grind them all to death!” In an instant, Ning formed nine Fire-Water Loti, surrounding nine of those people.

The nine Fire-Water Loti appeared out of nowhere, each with one petal of fire and one petal of water, one above and one below, and they ground down at their targets.

“Aaaah!” The woman with the viper on her shoulder let out a shrill scry, and was killed, ground into fine pieces.

“Quick.”

“Assemble the formation.”

Although all of them wanted to assemble the formation, of the nine people covered by Fire-Water Loti, six of them had already died while three were heavily injured. This caused the remaining Xiantian lifeforms

to all be shocked...this sort of ability was simply too terrifying. At such a great distance, this man was capable of simultaneously killing six Xiantian lifeforms? Generally speaking, Xiantian lifeforms weren't capable of long-distance attacks, because they were unable to ride on magic treasures to engage in distant attacks.

The six dead people were quite unfortunate; they weren't afraid of the fire and water which Ning was capable of controlling, but they hadn't expected that Ning would execute this 'Fire-Water Lotus', which contained a hint of the True Meaning of the Dao. If they had known in advance, they would have all immediately prepared protective Dao-seals, and thus wouldn't have instantly lost their lives.

"Assemble the formation!" The handsome youth's black armor immediately began to glow with runes, while at the same time those runes which appeared connected with the illusory dragons behind the many ordinary Dao-Soldiers, connecting together into a large whole.

In the blink of an eye, the handsome youth connected with a thousand of the ordinary Dao-Soldiers, and behind him appeared the illusion of a Flood Dragon.

"Assemble the formation."

"Assemble the formation."

One Xiantian lifeform after another immediately began to link together with the Dao-soldiers. Some activated a thousand, while others activated five hundred. Although the maximum was a thousand Dao-Soldiers, Ning had killed simply too many of them.

"Unfortunately, too many Dao-Soldiers have died, and we don't even have nine thousand. Otherwise, once we combined to form the entire Flood Dragon, we could effortlessly kill him." One illusory Flood Dragon after another appeared in mid-air, resulting in a total of eight illusory Flood Dragons, which were controlled and formed by those eight Xiantian lifeforms and thousands of Dao-Soldiers joining formations.

"But even though we aren't able to transform into a greater Flood Dragon, he will still die."

Deep within the mountain, in that private room.

The green flame continued to flicker in the middle of that ancient, unadorned cauldron. The blood red banner was currently hovering there, as a large number of dread wraiths were howling silently, wildly attacking.

Bei Zishan was seated in the lotus position, his face incomparably sinister.

“This person named Ji Ning was actually able to break my grand formation.” Zishan was both frantic and angry. He himself had been, this entire time, hiding, fleeing, and trying to refine this powerful magic treasure and thus suddenly rise in power. But without this great formation hiding him, there was no way for him to hide at all. In addition, there were still many dread wraiths that had yet to be absorbed. Right now, what he was trying to do was forcibly bring the process to a halt, as he would rather give up the many dread wraiths.

However, this sort of incomparably sinful magic treasure was also incomparably dangerous to make. If he wasn't careful, he would be devoured by it instead. He had to be extremely careful and cautious, even in an attempt to stop...he still had to kill each and every single one of those dread wraiths who had yet to be refined before he could be killed. If he tried to do it forcibly, he himself would be devoured.

To come to a halt needed time.

“Master, there are less than nine thousand Dao-Soldiers.” From within the mountain, a spirit-beast who had transformed into a human male's form called out frantically.

“What!” Bei Zishan, currently forcibly repressing his agitation, upon hearing the words from his spirit-beast, immediately grew frantic. “Less than nine thousand Dao-Soldiers? With less than nine thousand, there's no way to transform into a giant Flood Dragon. Given the power of this Ning, he can absolutely flee.”

Right at this moment, the blood-red banner suddenly began to shake, as

countless dread wraiths wildly attempted to break free.

“Not good.”

Bei Zishan forced himself to calm down. He knew that as soon as he lost his grip, those dread wraiths would throw themselves upon him, and he would probably die here today. Bei Zishan immediately made a small bag appear in his hand, which appeared similar to a brocade purse. From within the little purse, a black coffin appeared out of nowhere, which with a thud landed against the ground.

The coffin immediately opened, and a heart-trembling aura emanated forth. A large paw, covered with black fur, grabbed the sides of the coffin, and then sat up. This was a black-furred zombie which had glowing green eyes.

Whoosh.

The black-furred zombie landed on the ground, its body surrounded by a black energy that was visible to the naked eye. The black energy was a necromantic aura, and if a Xiantian lifeform were to absorb it, that person would definitely be poisoned to death. This zombie...was one of the final trump cards which Bei Zishan had. He had worked hard to create it from the corpse of a Zifu Disciple.

“Go. Kill him.” Zishan gave the order. Zombies were neither living nor dead. The black-furred zombie was at the level where it had a certain degree of intelligence. It could recognize the disciples of Zishan, and it could also quickly recognize situations as well as whom its enemies were. This black-furred zombie was already comparable to a Zifu Disciple, and it was extremely dangerous.

“Umm.” The black-furred zombie let out a low grunt, then walked out, then with a single leap, jumped out from the nearly 150 meter deep tunnel.”

Chapter 2: Lesser Thousand Sword Formation, Kill!

The Azure Firebird and the black serpent were currently high in the air, waiting impatiently. They were under orders to locate Ji Ning, but previously, the black serpent had already shouted three times, without any response at all.

“Can it be that the young master isn’t here?” The black serpent said frantically.

“Brother Black, look below.” The Azure Firebird spoke in the human tongue.

The black serpent looked downwards, only to see that on the formerly calm mountain, a large number of armored Dao-Soldiers had appeared, surrounded by frost and with fires blazing...those Dao-Soldiers and Xiantian lifeforms had forcibly formed into eight illusory Flood Dragons, and the power emanating from those illusory Flood Dragons caused even the Azure Firebird and the black serpent in the air to feel shock.

“Dao-Soldiers...thousands of them that can join together?” The Azure Firebird and the black serpent were shocked. The various local hegemonies of Swallow Mountain weren’t capable of such things. Only the Darcian Dynasty’s soldiers that were stationed at Southmont City were capable of this. “Such power...even if the two of us were to go attack, we’d probably be easily annihilated.”

“Look, young master Ji Ning.”

In front of these thousands of Dao-Soldiers, appeared a beast-clad youth who was emanating an aura of incomparable wildness and savagery. It was Ning!

“Young master Ji Ning! How can he possibly oppose thousands of joined Dao-Soldiers?!”

“Ji Ning, quick, flee!” The black serpent shouted frantically in the air.

Those Xiantian lifeforms bound against the pillars within the mountain stared towards the outside nervously as well. Outside, the boundless amounts of flame and frost that had appeared caused them to be shocked as well.

“Young master Ji Ning, that Zifu Disciple is currently refining that evil magic treasure. For now, he can’t be distracted. Quick, flee!” Blindfish howled frantically.

“Ji Ning, quick, leave! If you dawdle, it’ll be too late!” Ji Jadewich roared as well, his throat going hoarse.

“Quick, leave!”

All of the Xiantian lifeforms of the Ji clan were shouting frantically. They had been bound here for so long, and often heard the conversation of those people, and saw some dread wraiths enter the depths of the mountain...they knew that there was a Zifu Disciple here refining an incomparably vile magic treasure. Once this person completed it and personally attacked, what would the repercussions be?

“What? Thousands of linked Dao-Soldiers?” The group of bound Xiantian lifeforms suddenly saw that those many Dao-Soldiers who were being burnt by fire or frozen by frost suddenly formed into multiple illusory Flood Dragons. They were only able to see a small portion, but this was already enough to shock them.

“Quick, flee”

“Ji Ning, leave now!” All of them were incomparably frantic.

Hearing the frantic shouts from his Uncle Black from the skies, as well as the voices of his Master Blindfish, Ji Jadewich, Poortile, Ji Shan, and the others who were bound deeper in the mountain, how could Ji Ning, already poisoned, not go even wilder? Flee? Why would he flee? Even if he fled, he would unquestionably die. If he could risk his life to kill that Zifu Disciple, he might instead have a chance at life.

“Kill!” Ning saw the thousands of Dao-Soldiers in front of him. Not hesitating at all, he released his most powerful killing blow.

Rumble....

More than three hundred sword-type magic treasures appeared out of nowhere around Ning, every single sword glowing dimly with white light, while at same time activating the power of the natural world. Ning had already reached a very high level of attainment in formations, and so his ability to execute the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had clearly improved greatly as well. It wasn't like in the past, where he controlled it by rote and by memory; he now understood some of the mysteries inherent within, and knew how to guide them more effectively.

“What are those?!”

“How can swords fly like that?”

“Flying magic treasures?”

The eight Xiantian lifeforms amongst those thousands of Dao-Soldiers were completely stunned. Seeing the hundreds of flying swords all hovering there, they instantly thought of something...Zifu Disciple! One had to at least be a Zifu Disciple in order to control magic treasures and fly on them. This was all but common knowledge. But now, this youth was actually flying on magic treasures.

But how could they have imagined that Ning's soul had already reached the level of 'divine will', which was why he was able to accomplish this?

“He's a Zifu Disciple, Master, he's a Zifu Disciple. That youth is a Zifu Disciple!” Some of the Xiantian lifeforms in the Dao Battle-Armor were already beginning to cry out desolately.

“Die, then.” Ning instantly controlled that pulsating, glowing sword in front of him.

Swish!

That pulsating sword light immediately slashed out in an incomparably beautiful arc, leaving behind a desolate, beautiful line in the air. It easily

chopped through that handsome youth's chest, and the handsome youth stared, wide-eyed, in disbelief. "Zifu...Zifu..." Even in death, he couldn't believe it.

"No!" The tall, muscular fellow just began to cry out, but before he finished it, he was pierced through by the sword glow as well.

Their Dao-Soldier formation hadn't truly formed into a Flood Dragon, after all; they had only formed eight illusory Flood Dragons. Every single illusory Flood Dragon was formed from a single Xiantian lifeform Dao-Soldier and hundreds or a thousand Houtian Dao-Soldiers. In terms of defense alone, they were actually inferior to the combined forces of the nine Xiantian Dao-Soldiers of the second trial of the underwater estate.

Ning was naturally capable of winning through close combat and using the True Meaning of the Raindrop, but doing so would be very tiring, and he would have to face a group attack.

But now...

By relying on this level four [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], he was able to bring forth the power of an early Zifu Disciple using a ranked magic treasure. Even if the enemy truly had nine thousand Dao-Soldiers and nine Xiantian lifeforms and was capable of forming into a true Flood Dragon, Ning would still be able to fight. And now, when the enemy was like a platter of loose sand, unshaped and unformed, he naturally chopped through them as easily as chopping through vegetables.

"Zifu Disciple!"

"He's a Zifu Disciple."

The sword light slashed out in another graceful arc, piercing through those eight Xiantian Dao-Soldiers in succession. No matter how those Xiantian Dao-Soldiers attempted to flee, their speed was incomparably slower than the speed of that sword light. Even though the nearby Houtian Dao-Soldiers all tried to help block, those Houtian Dao-Soldiers were simply executed as well.

"A Zifu Disciple!"

“Zifu Disciple!”

One desolate scream after another shook the entire mountain. These Xiantian Dao-Soldiers were filled to the brim with unwillingness to accept this. They hadn’t imagined that this youth named Ji Ning was actually a Zifu Disciple! Ordering them to battle against a Zifu Disciple? They weren’t able to accept that this was how they would die. If they had known, they wouldn’t have come out at all.

“What.”

“This....”

In mid-air, the Azure Firebird and the black serpent watched with wide eyes, their mouths hanging open. From below, Ning was controlling hundreds of swords which were hovering in the air, and then formed into a single sword light which was dominating everyone and everything. This was power on a completely different level. Much like how Xiantian lifeforms could massacre Houtian experts, that sword light effortlessly executed those eight Xiantian Dao-Soldiers, and with their deaths, those Houtian Dao-Soldiers naturally were unable to maintain their grand formation.

“Ning, he...he’s a Zifu Disciple?” The black serpent, who had watched Ning grow up since he was a child, was somewhat stunned as well.

Even Blindfish, Jadewich, Shan, and the others trapped within the mountain who had been frantically calling for Ning to flee were stunned. From this angle, they couldn’t see Ning, but through the cave entrance, they were able to see many Dao-Soldiers. They personally saw those Dao-Soldiers dressed in black armor, which was to say the Xiantian Dao-Soldiers, be easily pierced through one by one by an incomparably brilliant sword light. All of those Xiantian Dao-Soldiers collapsed, dead.

In addition, as they died, all of them were howling with grief and rage, “Zifu Disciple!” “A Zifu Disciple!”

“A Zifu Disciple?” Blindfish and the others, including the other pitiable Xiantian lifeforms from the other powers here at the Swallow Mountain region, were all somewhat numb. Could it be that aside from Ning, there was another Zifu Disciple who was attacking?

But right at this moment...

Bang!

A black shadow suddenly leapt out from the already opened entrance to that dark underground cave. His green pupils swept those Xiantian lifeforms who were bound within this cave. There were still some ordinary servants here who hadn't joined the battle. Two unlucky bastards, because they had been fairly close to the cave entrance, had their bodies immediately invaded by the black necromantic energy swirling around the black-furred zombie when it appeared.

“Ahhh!”

“Ahhh!” The two unlucky bastards hadn't been able to become Dao-Soldiers. Naturally, they were quite ordinary in ability. As soon as the necromantic aura invaded their bodies, they let out desolate howls, then quickly dissolved into puddles of liquid.

The black-furred zombie had already, with a single step, moved past the cave entrance.

“Young master, be careful!” Blindfish howled frantically.

Ning, after seeing that the Xiantian Dao-Soldiers had been executed, retrieved his three hundred plus swords. After all, he was still just an early stage Xiantian lifeform. The Xiantian Ki in his body wasn't dense enough! If he were to control thousands of swords, his Ki would probably be used up in a single attack. If he just used these three hundred or so, he was still only able to execute it ten times.

His true opponent was that truly terrifying Zifu Disciple.

“Roaaaaar.” An angry roar rang out, and from the distance, a black

shadow flew over.

“Is that the Zifu Disciple?” Ning’s wing-type magic treasure trembled, and he immediately flew out in an arc, putting some distance between them. With a smashing sound, that black shadow smashed into the ground, causing a massive, thirty meter wide crater to appear on the ground. When Ning saw this, the look on his face changed.

The black-furred zombie stared at Ning, that black, fog-like necromantic aura swirling around his body.

“This fellow is so strong, and his speed is very fast.” Ning was still stunned, and he even was reminded of that black-furred aberration who had served as the third trial in the underwater estate. However, this black-furred zombie gave Ning an evil, baleful feeling, and had that black fog swirling around his body. That aberration who served as the third trial in the underwater estate didn’t.

“Kill.” The black-furred zombie stared at Ning, then charged towards him.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Activating the wing-type magic treasures, Ning moved like a ghost, constantly dodging. Although each time he dodged, it was rather difficult, he was still able to evade. Occasionally, the Darknorth Swords in his hands would land blows on the black-furred zombie, but only white smudges were left on it.

“This fellow seems quite similar to the black-furred aberration in the underwater estate. His strength is great, his speed is fast, and his body is incomparably tough. However, his strength is much lower.” In their exchange of blows, Ning immediately discovered that the black-furred zombie’s method of using force was very clumsy, while the black-furred creature in the underwater has intelligence. In terms of both footwork and palm techniques, although each movement seemed simple, even with Ning’s miraculous evasion techniques, he still couldn’t dodge.

“Not even at the advanced level of technique. Definitely not a Zifu Disciple. The antidote to my poison is probably being carried by that Zifu Disciple. He hasn’t come out, which means he definitely isn’t able to be

distracted right now. I have to seize the opportunity to get rid of him.” Ning understood that for the Zifu Disciple to still not come out meant the man was definitely in a tough situation.

While he was ill, go for the kill!

Swoosh!

The wing-type magic treasures on Ning’s back trembled, then took him in an arcing line, moving past the black-furred zombie. The zombie howled ferociously, wanting to attack Ning, but how could Ning, when using the [Windwing Evasion], be caught by the likes of him?

“Ji Ning?” A sinister, cold, sharp voice suddenly emanated out from the mountain. Ning immediately saw that midway in the mountain, at the ground in front of the cavern entrance, there was a man dressed in a loose black robe. This man’s hair was loosely bound, and his face was utterly ashen, without a hint of color. The oily green eyes the man had caused even greater shock to Ning than the black-furred zombie had.

Chapter 3: A Battle To the Death!

Bei Zishan swept the surrounding area with his gaze. He saw the areas frozen by frost or scorched by flames and those many corpses. In particular, when he saw, amongst the corpses, the bodies of those Xiantian lifeform Dao-Soldiers, Zishan's heart clenched. He ached! These were his subordinates. For forging and refining this sort of sinful magic treasure, he needed many subordinates to torment and torture people, and also some powerful subordinates to capture Xiantian lifeforms for him.

"All ruined." Zishan looked towards Ji Ning, his gaze filled with a sinister maliciousness. "My students and servants were all wiped out by you. Those potential dread wraiths that I had been cultivating and refining for so long, and was about to finish with...you forced me to stop. I, Bei Zishan, was actually by a little child like you to suffer such a loss! I won't mistreat you. In fact, I will have to 'thank' you and let you have a taste of what it is like to have your soul be tormented!

"Zifu Disciple."

"He's a Zifu Disciple."

Amidst the thousands of Dao-Soldiers, there were still quite a few screaming in terror.

"You are a Zifu Disciple?" Bei Zishan stared at Ning. After all, his evil magic treasure was only half completed because of Ning's interruption. However, even with this half-completed magic treasure, Zishan could be considered a peak Zifu figure. Based on the discussion between his disciples, however, this Ning was just a twelve year old youth of the Ji clan.

A twelve year old who had become a Zifu Disciple?

If this was true! Then Zishan was actually worried. For someone so young to have become a Zifu Disciple most likely meant that this person had some miraculous events occur. Perhaps he might have some sort of hidden, secret technique.

"Zifu Disciple? If I said I wasn't a Zifu Disciple, would you believe me?"

Ning said coldly.

Swoosh!

Zishan had been just standing there, but suddenly, a boat appeared beneath his legs. Stepping onto the boat, Zishan instantly began to pull away from Ning. Zishan, dressed in his long black robes, stared coldly at Ning. He had already decided to consider that Ning was an expert on the same level as him, and so he immediately pulled away.

Immortal practitioners came in all types. Fiendgod Body Refiners preferred close combat, while others who liked to use magic treasures, poisons, golems, and more would naturally prefer to pull to a distance before using their techniques. After all, close quarters combat was very dangerous. Bei Zishan, for example, liked to use poisons and magic treasures.

“Boom!” A black claw suddenly appeared, sweeping forwards and attacking Ning from behind.

Ning’s wing-type magic treasure trembled, and he flew out in an arc, immediately dodging past. As for that black claw, the wind from the attack alone had caused the ground to tear apart. The black-furred zombie, bellowing, charged towards Ning.

“Bei Zishan, prepare to die!” Ning, while dodging the black-furred zombie, simultaneously manifested more than four hundred sword-type magic treasures, all of which were under Ning’s control and immediately emanated a blurry white light.

“Indeed. There’s no need to forcibly control them all. All I need to do is just guide them into the correct flow. When I simply control the critical points of the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation...it becomes much easier to control this Lesser Thousand Sword Formation.” Ning previously, while meditating on formations, had tested out the fifth level of the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation. At the underwater mansion, although he had been able to use it, it had been too exhausting.

But this time, it was clearly much easier for him. In addition, thanks to Ning’s nonstop testing, his control over the 405 sword-type magic

treasures had become much more dexterous, and it became easier and easier for Ning's 'divine will' to control them.

"Magic treasures!" Zishan, astride his flying boat, saw this from afar. His face changed. "He's able to control magic treasures and fly on them. So he is indeed a Zifu Disciple! So many sword-type magic treasures....most likely they are almost all unranked, but so many unranked magic treasures joined together still pose a formidable threat."

"Roaaaaaaar." Growling, the black-furred zombie was still in pursuit of Ning, attacking again and again.

Ning, relying on his incomparably dexterous Windwing Evasion, was able to dodge aside time and time again. In a battle of life and death, one had to rely on one's advantages. This black-furred zombie clearly was incomparably strong and indestructibly tough. Battling with it head on was simply idiocy. Ning naturally understood that this black-furred zombie was probably reared by Bei Zishan. As long as he could kill Zishan, there would be no need to fear this black-furred zombie.

"Lesser Thousand Sword Formation, level five!" Ning constantly controlled the many swords hovering around him, and given that his understanding of the intricacies of the formation was rapidly increasing, his ability to utilize it was become greater as well.

"Go!" Ning's eyes suddenly flashed as he stared at the distant Zishan.

In front of him, there formed a flickering, unstable sword light, which suddenly shot out into the distance, as fast as lightning, leaving behind only seemingly solid yet seemingly illusory arc in the skies. It stabbed directly towards the distant Bei Zishan. Zishan had long since produced a horsetail whisk-type magic treasure in his hands, and seeing the attack, he immediately brandished the horsetail whisk, which transformed into three thousand white threads that sought to entangle that piercing sword light.

Both this flying boat as well this horsetail whisk were ranked magic treasures! Their power was formidable.

"Crackle....."

“Not good.” Zishan’s face changed, and he hurriedly controlled his horsetail whisk, making it so that even as those three thousand white threads were blocking and entangling the sword light, a large number of the white threads were also emanating rays of light, with each layer of them ablating and frantically neutralizing the oncoming force, causing the sword light to have lost almost all of its power before it even reached Zishan’s body.

This caused the distant Ning’s face to change as well. The power of the fifth level of the Lesser Thousand Swords Formation definitely wasn’t weak. The fourth level could be comparable to an early Zifu Disciple using a ranked magic treasure, so the fifth level had to be comparable to a more formidable Zifu Disciple, right?

“You really are a Zifu Disciple.” Zishan stared at Ning, his face filled with savagery. He shouted, “At such a young age, you are such a monster. How can I possibly spare you!”

In Zishan’s hands, a black item suddenly appeared which looked like a wasp’s nest. At the same time, it quickly grew greater, to the size of three meters tall. It was filled with countless holes, and there with countless buzzing sounds, one golden wasp after another swarmed out from those countless holes, instantly charging out. In the blink of an eye, those many wasps filled the skies, pouring towards Ning in a flood.

“Venomous bugs.” Ning was startled, and in front of his body, an utterly unstoppable sword light formed once more. “Kill!”

Swish!

A sword light pierced through the skies, directly flying towards those countless, tightly clustered swarm of golden wasps. With crackling sounds that were quite unpleasant to hear, the sword light slaughtered hundreds of the venomous bugs before having passed through to the other time. By now, more than half of the energy of the sword light had been used up, and it turned in an arc, once more stabbing into the swarm. This time, however, it used up all of its power in the swarm, with another few hundred of them having died.

“I can’t let this continue.” Ning, while using his wing-type magic treasures to dodge, immediately discarded the notion of using the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation to attack.

The Lesser Thousand Sword Formation used up a truly astonishing amount of energy. Ning had only used the fifth level version of the attack twice, with a single fourth level version of this attack. However, as a result, only sixty or seventy percent of his Xiantian Ki remained. There were, however, hundreds of thousands of these venomous bugs, while a single sword light of his had only killed seven or eight hundred.

Even if he had an unlimited amount of Ki, most likely he would only be able to unleash three more sword lights before the venomous bugs would have arrived before him.

“He’s dead for sure.” Bei Zishan stared at Ning.

“Fire-Water Lotus!”

Ning let out a low growl, and surrounding him, one fiery lotus petal after another, along with one water lotus petal after another, formed and merged, creating a lotus bud that was protecting Ning around him.

“Three buds of Fire-Water Loti.” Ning had used his full strength. Every single Fire-Water Lotus bud was created from three lotus petals of fire and three lotus petals of water. A larger lotus bud protected the smaller lotus petals, and thus...these three layers of Fire-Water Loti surrounded Ning, who in the middle of them was constantly using his Windwing Evasion.

The reason for this was that the black-furred zombie was constantly chasing, causing Ning to not dare to slack off in the slightest.

“Bzzzzzzz....” The countless, tightly clustered venomous bugs spread out towards Ning, wildly boring down towards the surface of the Fire-Water Loti, easily piercing through the first layer.

The three Fire-Water Loti that were formed into six layers were constantly swiveling, and as the many venomous bugs sought to burrow through them, one after another were killed by grinding, swiveling power of the layers of the Fire-Water Loti. However, they quickly reformed and

burrowed through the gaps between each of the layers of the Fire-Water Loti, continuing to burrow downwards. They quickly passed through the second layer, the third layer, the fourth layer...but many of the venomous bugs were dying as they did.

“A protective technique that contains the True Meaning of the Dao! Where did this Ji Ning learn this from?!” Watching so many of his venomous bugs die from afar, Bei Zishan not only ached for his lost, he also was astonished. This was because although a supreme sword technique was precious, this sort of protective technique was even more precious. Even in his own sect, such a technique would rarely be learned.

How could he have imagined...that this was a technique which Ning had developed on his own.

“They broke through the sixth level!” Ning, wielding his Darknorth Swords, was wildly blocking the venomous bugs who had broken through the sixth level. However, the carapaces of these golden wasps were tough and very hard to destroy. After blocking just a few, another wasp appeared, biting Ning’s body, breaking through the protective armor, and chomping down onto the flesh.

“Die.” Ning’s Darknorth Swords stabbed out wildly against the venomous bugs, while the injuries to his body were automatically healing.

“I can’t continue like this. Although I have the body of a Fiendgod and will automatically heal, as the numbers of these venomous bugs increase... I’ll still be devoured alive by them in the end.” Ning was frantic. “These venomous bugs are all under Bei Zishan’s control. All I need to do is kill Bei Zishan.”

Ning ignored the venomous bugs, preparing for a final, all-out assault.

“He has the body of a Fiendgod.” Watching from afar atop his flying boat, Zishan couldn’t wait any longer as well. His face was filled with rage. “His regenerative abilities are so astonishing, and he also has that protective technique! If this continues, even if my wasps are able to devour him, the vast majority of my precious wasps will all die. Although this magic treasure of mine hasn’t been completed yet, and using it will cause

great harm to the dread wraiths within...I can't wait any longer!"

Bei Zishan extended his hand, and instantly, a bloody banner appeared. The banner circulated with a layer of black light – solidified sin!

When the banner appeared, the surrounding world seemed to grow dark.

"Ji Ning, prepare to die!" Bei Zishan brandished the banner in his hand.

"Bei Zishan, prepare to die!" Ning, surrounded by the many venomous bugs who had broken through his three Fire-Water Loti and were wildly attacking him, let out a bellow as well. Around him, 486 sword-type magic treasures appeared. In this critical moment, Ning was wildly testing his own limits as well, because if the fifth level couldn't kill the enemy, then if he was going to use this technique, he had to use the sixth level!

The bloody banner flapped in the air!

486 sword-type magic treasures also hovered there, as a blurry sword light appeared in front of them!

Chapter 4: Bei Zishan!

Ji Ning had never before used the sixth level of the Lesser Thousand Swords Formation before. Originally, back at the underwater estate, using the fifth level alone had taken him to his limit. However, after he had spent time training in accordance with the [Nine Scrolls on Formations], Ning had learned how to better guide the swords in the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation through certain patterns. When he had used the fifth level, it had been fairly effortless for him, and so he now felt that although it might be difficult for him to use the sixth level, he should still be able to succeed.

“I have to succeed. If I fail, I die!” Ning put his full power on display, and 486 sword-type magic treasures hovered around him. Ning used his divine will to carefully control the critical ‘juncture’ swords of the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation, then slowly allowed the other swords to follow those junctures, causing those 486 swords to constantly fluctuate, like the waves in a sea.

Although it was difficult for Ning to control them, the 486 swords still began to glow with that blurry white light.

“Success!” Although Ning still had to defend against those wasps and even be bit by them, while at the same time dodge against the attacking black-furred zombie, Ning was incomparably excited! By relying on his successes in developing formations, he had been able to manifest this sixth level of the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation.

“Kill!” Ning stared savagely at the distant Bei Zishan, standing on his flying boat.

In front of his body, that incomparably sharp sword light coalesced, compressing to the utmost limit possible, and then, following Ning’s will, shot out like a meteor, slicing through the air and attacking towards Bei Zishan with an utterly indomitable, unstoppable aura.

“Die!” Standing atop the boat, Zishan also brandished the bloody banner in his hand.

The banner stirred.

The world around them turned dark, and one dread wraith after another, all visible to the naked eye, moaned as they flew out from the banner. These dread wraiths were the most powerful survivors of the battles between the dread wraiths. Nourished by the banner, they had become even more powerful! And this was with the treasure only being half completed; if it had been completely forged, it would be truly formidable.

Despite that, however, this half-finished magic treasure was enough to allow Bei Zishan to stare down arrogantly at the vast majority of Zifu Disciples.

“Roaaaaar!”

“Kill!”

“Devour you!”

The countless wraiths were incomparably savage, emitting ear-piercing shrieks. After having been nourished by the banner, these dread wraiths were capable of making sounds now! They all charged forward in a flood towards Ning at an impossibly fast speed. But of course, compared to Ning’s Lesser Thousand Sword Formation’s sword light, the Lesser Thousand Sword Formation’s sword light was still a bit faster.

“Hiss...” Zishan brandished the horsetail whisk in his hand, and it transformed into three thousand white strands, frantically attempting to block. However, this sword light was far more powerful than the previous one, and it chopped straight through the multiple layers. Bei Zishan frantically lifted up the handle of the bloody banner which he was holding, using it to block that sword light.

But the sword light was just too fast. Zishan just barely managed to touch it in time.

“Crackle...” The sword light struck the handle of the banner, and the entire bloody banner trembled slightly. The sword light instantly grew even weaker, and then it finally slammed into the armor-type magic treasure which Bei Zishan was wearing, that black robe. It just barely

managed to leave behind a black smudge on the black robe, and then it disappeared.

“Fortunately, I blocked it. It nearly broke through my body and claimed my life.” Zishan was shocked as well. A battle against a Zifu Disciple was a battle where death was always just a breath away. If one wasn’t careful and was hit by an enemy’s attack, one would lose one’s life. “Hmph. With those dread wraiths gnawing at him, he won’t be able to concentrate enough to launch another one of these sword lights. Those dread wraiths will gnaw him to death, no question about it.”

Zishan was extremely confident. Even if he himself was bitten by those dread wraiths, he would die.

Ning watched as those countless, tightly clustered dread wraiths howl as they flew towards him. His face couldn’t help but change. These howling dread wraiths easily bypassed his six layers of Fire-Water Loti. Dread wraiths were ghosts, and so weapons and Fire-Water Loti were completely unable to block them.

“Devour you!”

“Devour.”

Countless dread wraiths surged forward, instantly completely engulfing Ning within them, wildly rushing into Ning’s body.

“He’s dead for sure.” Watching from afar, Zishan was confidently awaiting the moment when Ning would invariably collapse. However, immediately afterwards, Zishan’s face began to change, because the bloody banner within his hand was beginning to tremble, and its aura was beginning to weaken as well as its power decreased. “What’s going on? What...what is this?”

Zishan was shocked and angered.

This banner was his trump card, his killing technique! But now, the aura of the banner was weakening nonstop, which meant that the power of the banner was dropping. The foundation of this magic treasure was those

dread wraiths...which meant there was only one possibility. Many dread wraiths were dying!

“How is this possible? Those dread wraiths are ghosts which are filled with hatred and murder. There’s no weapon at all capable of blocking them, and they are ripping and biting at the enemy’s soul. These countless dread wraiths aren’t able to devour his soul?” Zishan didn’t dare believe it. Even a Zifu Disciple’s soul probably wouldn’t be able to withstand these ghosts for long before being utterly devoured.

Within Ning’s consciousness.

Ning’s soul was there, and countless dread wraiths were flooding it, letting out howls as they attempted to devour it.

“What to do?” In his consciousness, Ning could sense those countless dread wraiths flooding in. He was shocked. The soul was a person’s foundation; if the soul was gone, then one wouldn’t even be able to reincarnate. At the same time, Ning had never had the experience of battling against ghosts.

“The [Nuwa Painting].” This was the first thing which Ning thought of.

In his consciousness, a Ji Ning dressed in white clothes appeared, sitting in the lotus position. At the same time, behind his body, hovering in mid-air, there appeared the form of Nuwa. Maiden Nuwa seemed to have become truly timeless, with the passage of time not diminishing her in the slightest. Her eyes were filled with grief and sympathy, like the eyes of a mother. She also emanated boundless amounts of light, covering the surrounding area.

When the many dread wraiths came charging over and touched the boundless light emanating from Maiden Nuwa, the evil aura emanating from their forms truly vanished. On their faces appeared smiles of peace and bliss.

All of them looked towards Ji Ning with grateful gazes. Some bowed in thanks, while others knelt in thanks.

And then, one after another vanished, returning to the Netherworld Kingdom to be reborn.

The many dread wraiths continued to charge forwards, but the image of Maiden Nuwa dissolved their evil auras, and once they were no longer possessed by that evil, there was no way those ghosts could continue to remain here in the mortal world. All of them thus went to the Netherworld Kingdom.

Actually, Ning's own soul was comparable to that of a Wanxiang Adept to begin with. Even if he didn't manifest a visualization of Maiden Nuwa, given the power of his soul, there was no way these dread wraiths would have been able to kill him...after all, the magic treasure was only half complete. It was only useful against Zifu Disciples, and it wasn't strong enough to deal with Wanxiang Adepts.

However, if he had done that, Ning would have been relying on the power of his soul to forcibly kill each of those dread wraiths.

As Ning instead visualized Maiden Nuwa, those dread wraiths were instead all purified and sent to be reincarnated, which was a great karmic merit.

Although this took a long time to discuss, in truth, it happened in an instant.

Ning had no fear at all of those countless dread wraiths charging into his body, attempting to devour his soul. Instead, he just stared at the distant Bei Zishan, and let out a bellow. "KILL!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

A ray of sword light flashed out, followed immediately by another one... four bursts of sword light shot out towards the distant Zishan. These four bursts of sword light virtually exhausted all of the Xiantian Ki in Ning's body, as the amount remaining was not enough to permit him to unleash a fifth. This was Ning's full strength attack!

"How is that possible? How could a youth not be afraid of his soul being

devoured by dread wraiths?!” Zishan, still gripping that bloody banner, was in disbelief. When he saw those rays of sword light shoot out, he was so terrified that he immediately controlled his flying boat to flee.

But how could the speed of the boat match the speed of the sword light flashes?

Zishan, terrified, brandished his horsetail whisk to defend while also thrusting out with his banner, but although he was just barely able to block the first attack, the second attack slashed outwards in an arc, directly piercing through the black robes that served as an armor-type magic treasure, stabbing into his body.

Swish! Swish!

The two other rays of sword light also instantly pierced through his head and his neck. In the corner of his forehead, a hole appeared. His neck, meanwhile, was completely cut through, and his head went flying.

“Impossible...” A look of disbelief remained on Zishan’s face.

The distant black-furred zombie came to a halt as well, confusion appearing in its eyes. As for those venomous wasps, many of whom had died as they had thrown themselves in their attack on Ning, they quickly retreated as well. Those three Fire-Water Loti had crushed to death countless wasps, and without an order from their master, they naturally would prefer to flee.

Only now did Ning retrieve his sword-type magic treasures, a look of disbelief appearing in his eyes. “I...I killed a Zifu Disciple? I succeeded?”

But right at this moment...

From Bei Zishan’s corpse, just as it was falling down from the flying boat, a golden light suddenly appeared. Given Ning’s visual prowess, he could instantly tell...that it was a golden bug!

“What’s that?” A golden bug actually flew out from the body? Ning felt puzzled, while at the same time, he felt that something was off. He had the sense that he couldn’t allow that golden bug to fly away...but his Xiantian Ki had been almost completely exhausted, while the Fire-Water

Lotus wasn't capable of being manifested at such a great distance.

"Rumble..."

Suddenly, the entire world seemed to transform from day into night. In the night sky, many stars twinkled and flashed, and as they did, the countless stars seemed to have transformed into a stellar sea. Within that stellar sea, there was an enormous full moon, and as the light of the moon shone down, the soft moonlight landed upon the body of that frantically fleeing golden bug.

The golden bug seemed to be utterly terrified, flying at high speed and trying to flee.

But suddenly, that soft moonlight solidified into a giant hand, with gently grasped that golden bug, which in its incomparable terror, let out a terrified cry. "Spare me, spare me!"

"Crunch!" With a light squeeze of the giant moonlight hand, the golden bug was crushed into dust.

And then, that night sky, those millions of stars, and that moon all disappeared, with the skies once more returning to daylight.

"This...this is..." Ning stood there, his face filled with shock. "A Manifestation of stars...a Wanxiang Adept! A Wanxiang Adept!"

"You were too careless." From high up in the air, a man flew over on the wind, dressed in a blue robe and with long, unbound hair. He had a smile on his face. "You worked so hard to kill the body of that Bei Zishan, but you almost let him borrow the body of the Life Gu-Bug to flee. Bei Zishan was an expert in using bugs, so naturally he raised a Life Gu-Bug. In killing him, you should've killed his Life Gu-Bug as well. By not doing so, you almost wasted all of your previous effort. That wouldn't have been good."

Ning understood that he had met a major figure today. Swallow Mountain didn't have any Wanxiang Adepts. Ning immediately bowed respectfully. "Ji Ning greets you, senior."

Chapter 5: Wanxiang Adept

TL Notes:

After doing some research, 'Dragonmeet' has been changed to 'Rain Dragon'; when I first started working on it, I didn't realize that 应龙 was an actual creature, and thought the 应 meant to greet/respond to (which it does). So the term is actually 'Ying Dragon', which some ppl have translated to be 'Responsive Dragon' (which sounds stupid), but since according to the texts I read, it was a type of dragon that controlled rain, I'm going to go with Rain Dragon!

The blue-robed man, his long hair fluttering in the wind, descended in front of Ji Ning. Laughing, he said, "My surname is Mu, while my name is Xiao. Others address me as Adept Mu."

"Greetings to you, Adept Mu." Ning felt his heart calm down. This Wanxiang Adept whom he had never met had just told Ning his name and surname. Clearly, he held an excellent opinion of Ning.

"Thank you, Adept Mu, for intervening. Otherwise, if this Bei Zishan were to have fled, he most likely would have caused more calamities in the future." Ning immediately expressed his gratitude.

Adept Mu had a smile on his face as he shook his head. "Actually, I should be the one thanking you. I came here for the purpose of killing this Bei Zishan, and I spent months investigating before I found him hiding here. Unfortunately, this Bei Zishan set up that large formation. Although I am a Wanxiang Adept, if I were to attempt to break the formation...I didn't have confidence in my ability to do so. Thus, I have been waiting here. I was planning to wait until he left the formation before exterminating him, but I didn't expect that I would end up personally witnessing a fine performance."

Ning was stunned.

What?

So this Adept Mu had been hiding here early on, and had been watching

everything occur?

“Afterwards, you broke open the formation.” Adept Mu sighed. “Only then did I know that it was you who did it. A youth who was able to break this formation. Formidable. In addition, I didn’t expect that all of those Dao-Soldiers, Xiantian lifeforms, and even Bei Zishan himself would be disposed of, all by you alone. Hahaha...that made things simple for me.”

“If I had known that Adept Mu was present, then I wouldn’t have had to exhaust myself.” Ning said hurriedly.

Adept Mu looked curiously at Ning. “Ji Ning, I wish to ask you. Are you a Zifu Disciple? Or a Xiantian lifeform?”

A person’s strength couldn’t be judged from the surface.

However, Adept Mu was someone who had been watching for a very long time from outside. In particular, after Ning broke open the formation, he had watched carefully as Ning engaged in those battles. As the saying goes, the eyes of the viewers are the clearest...Adept Mu discovered a number of issues which made him believe that Ning shouldn’t be a Zifu Disciple.

“I have not yet established my ‘Violet Palace’.” Ning didn’t hide it.

Adept Mu immediately revealed a look of surprise. “Indeed! I saw that your swordplay is exquisite, and that you should have reached the level of the ‘True Meaning of the Dao’. If you were a Zifu Disciple, when you used your elemental energy to execute such exquisite swordplay...you should have been able to easily defeat that black-furred zombie, and that battle should have been very simple for you. But you were actually in dire straits, which is why I guessed that you shouldn’t be a Zifu Disciple. Only, if you aren’t a Zifu Disciple, then you must be using ‘divine will’ to control all those sword-type magic treasures and fly with them. You, a mere Xiantian lifeform, have such a powerful soul. This truly is rare, quite rare!”

Ning nodded.

He didn’t deny it, because even in the records and books he had read, he had read of some incomparably monstrous Xiantian lifeforms who were

able to do what he did.

“My soul was powerful at birth.” Ning said. “Ever since I was a child, I could divide my mind. Afterwards, when I gained insights into the True Meaning of the Dao, my divine will was formed.”

Facing a Wanxiang Adept, a person with the power to easily destroy him, Ning naturally didn't have to play any games. Since he was an incomparably monstrous talent, he had to show it off. That might even be of benefit to him.

“I want to ask you another thing.” Adept Mu looked at Ning, as though he were looking at a piece of unpolished jade. “Are you training in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]?”

“Yes.” Ning nodded.

“Hahaha....” Adept Mu laughed delightedly. “Do you know who I am? Why I was in pursuit of Bei Zishan?”

Ning looked at Adept Mu, then shook his head. He had never met the man; how could he know who he was?

Adept Mu said directly, “I am a Rain Dragon Guard of the Darcian Dynasty. I am under orders to pursue and kill Bei Zishan.”

“Rain Dragon Guard?” Ning was stunned.

After he had killed that Greater Monster, Serpentwing, his parents had given him a general explanation of the Stillwater Commandery, and how there was a powerful force within it that absolutely could not be offended; the Rain Dragon Guards! The Rain Dragon Guards was the most powerful military organization within the Darcian Dynasty, completely composed of Immortal practitioners, and according to legend, only those at least at the Wanxiang Adept level were able to join.

The Rain Dragon Guards had an extremely special status. They directly served the Darcian Dynasty!

Amongst the incomparably numerous forces and powers spread across

the entire Stillwater Commandery, the two most highly ranked were the Marquis of Stillwater and the Rain Dragon Guards! The Marquis of Stillwater was the master of this area, and his roots here were very deep. But the Rain Dragon Guards were directly subordinate to the Darcian Dynasty. They themselves had numerous experts, and behind them they had the entire Darcian Dynasty as their backer.

“Ji Ning.” Adept Mu looked at Ning. “The Darcian Dynasty’s Rain Dragon Guards are the most powerful force in existence in this vast land. No single tribe, no single school, no single sect...can come even close to comparing with my Rain Dragon Guards!”

Ning nodded, acknowledging this.

“The Rain Dragon Guards are quite independent and under no restrictions. Once you become a Rain Dragon Guard, you can be blessed with a tribe, and that you can carve out a territory of ten thousand kilometers for the land of your tribe. This land will be protected by the Rain Dragon Guards! Even if you die, the Rain Dragon Guards will protect that land for a thousand years. No power will dare invade it, as if they do, that would signify a challenge to the Rain Dragon Guards, and we Rain Dragon Guards will tear out any such invading force by their very roots!” Adept Mu said.

Ning had heard his father say as well that the Rain Dragon Guards did indeed have an exalted status, and even their tribes would benefit.

“Adept, you’ve said so many things, but it isn’t as though I can become a Rain Dragon Guard.” Ning laughed.

Adept Mu just looked at Ning. “I ask you this. Are you willing to become a Rain Dragon Guard?”

“ME!?” Ning’s eyes widened. “I...I’m just a Xiantian lifeform. Even if I want to, my power is far from being sufficient.”

But Adept Mu just shook his head. “It isn’t a major issue if your power is weak. Right now, you aren’t able to directly join the Rain Dragon Guards, but our Rain Dragon Guards have a preparatory corps as well! Much like how some schools, sects, and tribes will intentionally attract some

geniuses to join them, we Rain Dragon Guards also have a preparatory corps which will draw in some geniuses to join for instruction and guidance.”

“Upon joining the preparatory corps, you’ll have access to all sorts of training techniques and even divine abilities.” Adept Mu sighed. “If you consider the Rain Dragon Guards to be a school or a sect, then we are the most powerful one of all. We have countless Immortals practitioners, and even Celestial Immortals have appeared from within our ranks.”

“But of course, the threshold for joining the preparatory corps is quite high. It isn’t just anyone who can join. Fortunately, you train in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique in the world.” Adept Mu looked at Ning. “Anyone who relies on the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] to become a Xiantian lifeform can immediately enter the preparatory corps. There’s no need to undergo the various trials.”

“The [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] is simply too hard. Every single person who can use it to become a Xiantian lifeform is a monstrous talent.” Adept Mu sighed emotionally. Ning, standing there, made a sound of agreement. It was true. He himself had spent that night meditating on the Dao before understanding how to fuse fire and water and to break through to become a Xiantian lifeform. Others most likely would also have to find their own secret ways to fuse fire and water as well.

“Every single Immortal practitioner who trains in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] is extraordinary.” Adept Mu said. “For ordinary Immortal practitioners, only those at the Wanxiang Adept level are permitted to join the Rain Dragon Guards.”

“But for [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] practitioners, as long as they reach the Zifu level and learn a divine ability, their battle power will be equivalent to a Wanxiang Adept’s, and thus they would be allowed the chance to enter the Rain Dragon Guards. But of course, that just means you’ll have the chance to; whether or not you’ll actually be able to enter depends on your ability.” Adept Mu said. “I myself only was able

to join the Rain Dragon Guards after becoming a late-stage Wanxiang Adept.”

Ning, hearing this, blinked twice.

Late-stage Wanxiang?

The Rain Dragon Guards truly were difficult to join!

Right at this moment, those thousands of surviving Dao-Soldiers were all staring towards this direction in terror. From the skies, two figures descended as well; they were the human forms of the Azure Firebird and the black serpent. They, too, stared towards Ning.

“You go rescue Master Blindfish and the others. I have some things to discuss with this senior.” Ning immediately instructed.

“Yes.” The Azure Firebird and the black serpent responded. After having watched the grand battle between Ning and Bei Zishan, their hearts were filled with dread.

Although Ning was frantically worried about his mother, he naturally couldn’t slight or be discourteous to this Wanxiang Adept in front of him. Ning even had the intention of inviting him to go to West Prefecture City.”

“As long as you join the preparatory army, your future prospects will be limitless.” Adept Mu said. “In the future, you becoming a Rain Dragon Guard will be a matter of course. The chances you will have there will be far greater than what you have here in the tribes, at least. Think about it carefully. If you are willing to join the preparatory corps, then go back and bid your parents farewell. I will take you directly to Stillwater City!”

To Stillwater City?

Ning was stunned.

“Adept Mu.” Ning said hurriedly. “There are so many benefits to joining the preparatory corps. I fear there must be some sacrifices as well, right?”

“Naturally.” Adept Mu nodded. “Upon joining the preparatory corps, until you become a Zifu Disciple, you are forever forbidden from leaving

the mountain.”

“Forever forbidden from leaving the mountain?” Ning was puzzled.

Adept Mu said, “The headquarters of we Rain Dragon Guards is located on the peaks of a tall mountain. The preparatory corps is there as well! If you can’t even become a Zifu Disciple, then you will simply die of age on the mountain. After becoming a Zifu Disciple, you can often leave, but you’ll still need to spend most of your time on the mountain, as you’ll only leave on orders. Only when you become a Rain Dragon Guard will you have freedom.”

Ning nodded.

He could tell that the preparatory corps was actually comparable to a school. If one didn’t become a Zifu Disciple, one wasn’t permitted to leave, while even after becoming a Zifu Disciple, one would be stationed on the mountain and only be allowed to leave on orders.

“I have my underwater estate.” Ning said to himself. “The Juhua Immortal, by relying on that ancient underwater estate, was able to live for millions of years, even as a Loose Immortal, and his power was comparable to a Celestial Immortal...there are many secrets contained within the underwater estate which I must investigate. Once I become a Zifu Disciple, I’ll be able to bind the control talisman. Why should I be in a hurry to join the preparatory corps?”

Adept Mu, standing there, spoke again. “Ning, who in the Swallow Mountains can possibly provide you tutelage? For someone as naturally gifted as you, you must expand your horizons.”

“Thank you, Adept.” Ning pondered for a time, then shook his head. “Adept, I imagine that you heard as well that my mother is gravely ill. For now, I don’t wish to go.”

Adept Mu, hearing this, nodded. “Since that’s the case, I won’t press you. This is the talisman of the Rain Dragon Guards. In the future, if you encounter any danger on the road to Stillwater City, if you show off this talisman, perhaps it might be of use.” As he spoke, he turned over his hand, and a square black talisman appeared in his palm, with the image of

a Rain Dragon on it.

“Thank you, Adept.” Ning immediately accepted it. “Ji Ning has one thing to request of you, Adept.”

Adept Mu immediately laughed. “You assisted me in exterminating Bei Zishan of Snow Dragon Mountain. I had wanted to help send you to Stillwater City to enter the preparatory corps of the Rain Dragon, but I didn’t expect you wouldn’t want to go...I was worrying about how to repay your assistance. Go ahead and tell me. If I can help you, I will.

Chapter 6: Returning

Snowdragon Mountain? Bei Zishan? This Bei Zishan had been a Zifu Disciple of Snowdragon Mountain?

Ji Ning temporarily suppressed this line of thought, then immediately said with sincerity, “My mother is gravely ill. I expect that my Ji clan is unable to save her. I would like to ask you, Adept Mu, to go on a trip to visit my Ji clan of the West Prefecture and save my mother’s life.”

Adept Mu saw the look on Ning’s face, and he couldn’t help but sigh. “I’m not talented in medical treatments, but I can go take a look. If I can save her, naturally I will. But if I cannot...”

“Adept, if you are willing to go, Ji Ning will be forever grateful.” Ning said hurriedly.

“Scum, get over here!” Adept Mu suddenly turned and stared into the distance, barking loudly. From afar, that black-furred zombie whose entire body was swirling with that necromantic aura walked over obediently, staring at Adept Mu with a hint of dread in its oily green eyes.

Adept Mu waved his hand, and a violet coffin appeared in front of him.

“Get in.”

Adept Mu gave the order.

The black-furred zombie obediently opened the coffin, then leapt in and lay down, then closed the lid behind it.

“This is a corpse-preserving coffin.” Adept Mu, with a wave of his hand, took back the corpse-preserving coffin while explaining to Ning, “This black-furred zombie had just lost its master. If it were to be permitted to roam about, it would definitely harm many people. Thus, when I was speaking with you, I used a thread of my Ki bind it to myself.”

Ning nodded.

“Don’t worry. You were the one to kill Bei Zishan, and so I won’t touch any of the things he left behind.” Adept Mu said. “Only, at your current

level of power, you are not able to tame this black-furred zombie, and so I am taking it with me.”

As he spoke, Adept Mu looked at the distant corpse of Bei Zishan. Zishan’s corpse immediately flew over, along with his various magic treasures, including the flying boat, his horsetail whisk, the bloody banner, and the nest which held the hornets. Adept Mu reached out with his hand, and a ring which had been on Zishan’s fingers flew off, entering Adept Mu’s hand.

“This is a ranked storage-type magic treasure.” Adept Mu said. “You are unable to bind it, so I will help you in retrieving the items within.”

Whoosh....

Soon, Adept Mu completed his binding of the ring, and as he did, a large number of miscellaneous items appeared out of nowhere onto the ground, amongst which were Dao Battle-Armor suits, foodstuffs, some golden items, as well as some alchemical ingredients as well as various bottles.

“Judging from the look of your skin, you should have suffered a poisoning by the Hearteater Powder.” Adept Mu flipped his hand, and one of the little bottles on the ground flew up, with the words ‘Hearteater Antidote’ written atop it. Clearly, with so many bottles present, Zishan himself was worried that he would use a wrong bottle, and so had labeled all of them.

Adept Mu opened the bottle’s plug, glanced at it, then nodded. “This is the antitode. Eat a pill. You can collect these various items and ranked magic treasures as well...although you are currently unable to bind them, when you become a Zifu Disciple, you will be. Don’t have any worries; although these things are treasures to you; they aren’t worth anything to me at all.”

“Thank you, Adept.” Ning was very grateful.

Although he knew that these things weren’t worth much to the Adept, the actions of this Adept Mu were clean and decisive. How could Ning not feel grateful for how well the man was treating him, a mere Xiantian lifeform?

“One day, I absolutely must repay this kindness.” Ning said to himself.

Ning swallowed the pill, which gave off a clear, fragrant taste, almost like a pellet of sugar. As soon as the pellet entered his stomach, it immediately dissolved. Soon, he felt a warm sensation throughout his entire body, and every single bit of Hearteater poison that was spread throughout his body suddenly dissolved like the snow, quickly and completely disappearing. The pain which had been spreading throughout his body vanished as well, and those red spots on his face faded.

“This hornet’s nest...” Adept Mu pointed at the hornet’s nest, which had many venomous hornets within. “The hornet’s nest is an unranked magic treasure. You can bind it. However, as for the many hornets within the nest...to control them mentally, you’ll have to become a Zifu Disciple, and then slowly bind them with your Ki. Prior to becoming a Zifu Disciple, remember to often bring them food to eat. Don’t starve them to death. If they are starved, they will start to kill each other and devour each other.”

Ning nodded immediately. “Understood.”

“Hurry up and bind the hornet’s nest. Oh. Here’s a manual on binding hornets. This is a secret manual of Snowdragon Mountain. It isn’t that precious, but it does contain the basics for binding hornets and pests.” Adept Mu immediately saw a fur-clad book amongst Bei Zishan’s possessions. “Binding hornets is fairly simple. Only, finding them is very hard, and so too is raising them. There’s no need for you to be in a rush to learn. These things can wait for you to become a Zifu Disciple before learning.”

Ning accepted the manual, which had three characters atop it: [Insect Binding Manual].

“Because this hornet’s nest has venomous insects, there’s no way you can store it within a storage-type magic treasure.” Adept Mu handed the nest to Ning. “However, the hornet’s nest can change in size. You can shrink it, then carry it on you.”

“Yes.” Ning acknowledged. He immediately accepted the enormous black hornet’s nest. Prior to handing it over, Adept Mu had already erased

the remaining magic power that the hornet's nest had contained, and so Ning was able to easily bind it. Otherwise, Ning would have had to spend an enormous amount of time just wiping out the remnant magic power left behind by Bei Zishan.

"Smaller, smaller, smaller." Ning looked at the black hornet's nest rapidly shrink, until it was the size of a finger. With a flip of his hand, he picked up a cloth sack, then placed the hornet's nest within it. He placed the sack within his clothes, and the armor-type magic treasure he was wearing shifted in configuration slightly, accommodating the sack within.

"Collect them all."

Ning waved his hand, and collected the many miscellaneous items on the ground, as well as manuals and poisons which Bei Zishan had left behind. As for Bei Zishan's ranked magic treasures, Ning didn't touch them.

"These ranked magic treasures." Adept Mu pointed at the bloody banner as he spoke. "I am going to take away this Myriad Wraiths Banner. This is a magic treasure which was birthed from sins. I need to take it back...and it is also proof that I've accomplished my mission. You can keep the rest."

"Alright." Only now did Ning collect the other ranked magic treasures.

He was unable to use any of them, and so all he could do was to collect them for now.

"The Myriad Wraiths Banner..." Adept Mu picked up the bloody banner, which glowed with a faintly visible black aura. "Who knows how many people were tortured to death to create it? What a terrible, weighty sin! This Bei Zishan really was fated to die; he actually used this Myriad Wraiths Banner against you, but your soul is already at the 'divine will' level. How could this incomplete Myriad Wraiths Banner possibly do anything to you?"

Adept Mu was under the impression that Ning had relied on his powerful soul to destroy all of those dread wraiths. He didn't know that Ning had, in reality, had relied upon a visualization of Maiden Nuwa in order to pacify all of those dread wraiths.

“Look. This is sin. Sin so heavy, one can see it with the naked eye. And yet, boundless karmic merits are very hard to see.” Adept Mu pointed at the black aura surrounding the bloody banner. “Sin which one can already see with the naked eye...you can imagine how grave and serious the sin is. We Raindragon Guards naturally must exterminate a person who has committed such grave sins.”

Ning looked and nodded.

Within the mountain cave, Blindfish and the others had their bodies and clothes covered with blood.

“Quick, lift them up.”

“Hurry.”

The black serpent and the Azure Firebird were shouting at those servants. How could the servants dare to resist? They obediently lifted, carried, and piggybacked those who were unable to walk on their own.

“The young master?”

“Where is young master Ji Ning?” Blindfish and Ji Jadewich asked, along with others.

The black serpent just said, “The young master is outside.”

Blindfish was still able to walk on his own, but Jadewich had to be lifted. All of them walked out of the cave, and as they did, they saw those thousands of terrified Dao-Soldiers, as well as the corpses which littered the ground, as well as Ji Ning, off in the distance, who was currently chatting with Adept Mu.

Ning turned to look. When he saw his master Blindfish, his entire body covered with blood, as well as Jadewich and the others be carried over, he couldn't help but feel his heart ache. He couldn't help but call out, “Master Blindfish.”

“Young master.” Blindfish spoke as well.

“You...you all...” Ning didn't know what to say.

“Thank you, young master.”

“Thank you, young master Ji Ning.” Not just the people of the Ji clan; even those Xiantian lifeforms of the Riverbank clan, the Ironwood clan, the Bandit clan, and the various other clans, all of whom had their dantians shattered, spoke out in gratitude. The destruction of their dantians made them cripples, but they already felt boundless gratitude for being able to see the sun again and for being able to return to live amongst their clans.

In his heart, Ning felt boundless sourness. These people included the enemies of the Ji clan, true, but in the past, they were glorious, respected Xiantian lifeforms. But now, all of their dantians had been destroyed.

The hint of excitement he had felt prior to this when he had acquired all of those treasures of Bei Zishan completely vanished. Ning turned to look towards those servants and barked, “How many more people are imprisoned within this mountain?”

“There’s most likely more than a million people imprisoned here, but it’s hard to say if even half remain alive.” Immediately, some servants spoke out nervously.

Ning, hearing this, was stunned.

A million?

“What a sin!” Adept Mu shook his head and sighed. “Ji Ning...these thousands of Dao-Soldiers as well as hundreds of thousands of surviving commoners...let those two spirit-beasts deal with them. The two of you, remember that those thousands of Dao-Soldiers were innocent. They were forced to do what they did by Bei Zishan. Do not further violate the proscriptions against murder.”

“Yes.” The black serpent and the Azure Firebird hurriedly nodded. They had previously seen the power of those Flood Dragon Dao-Soldiers. Although they could spare the lives of those Dao-Soldiers, they absolutely would take away those Dao Battle-Armors.

“I’ll hand everything here to you two.” Ning instructed.

“Don’t worry.” The black serpent and the Azure Firebird responded.

“Ji Ning, let’s go. Let’s go to your Ji clan’s West Prefecture City.” Adept Mu said. “I can bring these people along as well.”

As he spoke, he waved his hand, and a leaf appeared out of nowhere. The leaf rapidly expanded in size, and soon became an enormous leaf that was dozens of meters long. Ning, seeing this, immediately had Master Blindfish, Jadewich, and the other members of the Ji clan all stand atop the leaf. As for the Bandit clan, the Riverbank clan, and the other clans, they temporarily rested here, awaiting their clan’s forces to come pick them up.

“Let’s go.”

Adept Mu, Ning, Blindfish, and the other Xiantian lifeforms of the Ji clan who had their dantians destroyed had all mounted the leaf. The enormous green leaf, dozens of meters long, flew rapidly into the air, quickly flying beyond the peaks of the mountains and disappearing into the skies.

Chapter 7: Seeing Mother

The single green leaf had Ji Ning as well as more than twenty others on it. It flew through the clouds, hurrying towards the direction of West Prefecture City.

Everyone was either seated or lying down, while Ning and Adept Mu Xiao were standing.

“Adept, prior to this, you said that Bei Zishan was from Snowdragon Mountain?” Ning asked the question he had been contemplating.

“Right. Snowdragon Mountain.” Adept Mu glanced at Ning and nodded. “Snowdragon Mountain can be considered one of the most powerful forces of the entire Stillwater Commandery, and within the school, there are multiple Primordial Daoists who stand guard. Their roots are quite deep.”

Ning was secretly shocked.

Multiple Primordial Daoists?

“Precisely because the school is so large and it has so many methods of training, it also possessed some evil techniques, and so naturally, it will also have some Immortal practitioners who have embarked upon an evil path.” Adept Mu said. “Snowdragon Mountain cares more about power, and thus within it, it possesses Demon practitioners, Evil practitioners, Immortal practitioners, Buddhist practitioners, and all sorts of other practitioners. It values power the most.”

Adept Mu sighed, “Precisely because within it, the ‘fish and dragons are mixed together’, many people are attracted to Snowdragon Mountain, causing its power to grow even more enormous. Some Zifu Disciples who have departed from it will establish their own territory elsewhere, under the banner of Snowdragon Mountain. They can be considered branches, I suppose. These branches will often collect some talented youths and send them to the main school. Thus, Snowdragon Mountain continues to grow more and more powerful.”

“But of course, compared to our Raindragon Guards...Snowdragon Mountain is incomparably inferior.” Adept Mu laughed. “Any one of the Loose Immortals which we Raindragon Guards have stationed here in the Stillwater Commadery is capable of eradicating the entire Snowdragon Mountain school.”

Ning nodded.

This was no joke.

Snowdragon Mountain was nothing more than a school, while the Raindragon Guards was the most powerful military force the Darcian Dynasty possessed, overawing the entire world. Of course they weren't on the same level.

“Look. We're here.” Adept Mu pointed into the distance. “West Prefecture City is up ahead.”

“We're here?” Ning was stunned. He saw that in the distance, there was a forest which surrounded a magnificent city. This was indeed West Prefecture City, where he had lived since he was young. Ning couldn't help but feel stunned. “The speed at which Wanxiang Adepts travel on their magic treasures truly is astonishing! A distance of thousands of kilometers was travelled in the blink of an eye.”

And then, Ning began to worry. “I wonder how Mother is doing. Mother has always been well. Why is she suddenly gravely ill?”

Within West Prefecture City.

Yuchi Snow was resting in her room, while outside of the room, her husband, Ji Ishwin, was currently speaking with Ji Ninefire.

“This is all caused by that calamity from the past.” Ishwin shook his head.

Ninefire sat there, nodding slightly. “That disaster changed the destiny of the two of you, husband and wife. Ishwin, you were the most talented genius our Ji clan had produced in a thousand years. When you were a

child and your father died, you suddenly began to soar...you had already established your 'Violet Palace' and embarked onto the path of Immortals as a Zifu Disciple. Unfortunately, it was all ruined."

"It doesn't matter if my future potential on the path of Immortals is gone." Ishwin shook his head and sighed. "During that disaster, the elder brother of my wife, the most powerful of us three, lost his life for the sake of protecting myself and Snow. Snow had already been badly injured, but for the sake of birthing Ning, she utilized a secret technique that used up her own lifeforce...although my future potential on the Immortal path has been destroyed, I got off the easiest, out of the three of us."

Ninefire shook his head gently, sighing.

Fate makes fools of men!

Adventuring in the vast, boundless world outside was indeed far more dangerous than living here in Swallow Mountain. Experts were as common as the clouds. There would be lucky encounters, but there would also be disastrous ones. For example, when the Yuchi siblings and Ishwin had met with that crisis, the result had been this.

"Hm?" Ninefire suddenly lifted his head.

From high up in the air, a green leaf was slashing through the skies until it landed within a courtyard. Atop this leaf were Adept Mu, Ning, Blindfish, Jadewich, and many others.

"This..." Ishwin stared in astonishment at the people in front of him, then immediately dashed over. "Jadewich, Shan, Blindfish...you all came back? What happened to all of you? How is it that all of you are injured? What have you all been doing these past days? Why did you all suddenly go missing?"

"Greetings, Patriarch." The twenty-plus Xiantian lifeforms of the Ji clan quickly recognized their Patriarch, and in unison, they immediately called out.

Ninefire naturally knew that more than twenty Xiantian lifeforms of his clan had gone missing, and he had been utterly frustrated by this affair.

Now, seeing these Xiantian lifeforms all reappear, he was both surprised and delighted. He hurriedly said, “When we realized you had gone missing, our entire Ji clan started to search for you. Are you all well?”

“Our dantians have been destroyed, but we are very lucky to still be alive.” Jadewich said hoarsely.

“Dantians destroyed?” Ninefire stared, wide-eyed.

A nearby youth with long hair called out as well, “Patriarch, it was only thanks to Ji Ning as well as this Adept that we were able to survive this time.”

“Adept?” Ninefire and Ishwin felt a surge of electricity in their hearts.

Adept...

Then that meant this was a Wanxiang Adept! The entire Swallow Mountain area didn’t have a single Wanxiang Adept.

The two both looked at Adept Mu. Actually, when they first saw him, they had the feeling that this was an extraordinary figure. To be able to ride on a magic treasure to come here...they guessed that he was at least a Zifu Disciple, but they didn’t expect that he was actually a Wanxiang Adept. They saw how Ning was standing to the side of this Wanxiang Adept, as though they seemed to be on good terms. In their hearts, they couldn’t help but feel puzzled as to how Ning had managed to end up getting to know this Wanxiang Adept.

“Ji Ninefire (Ji Ishwin) greets you, Adept.” Ninefire and Ishwin both said respectfully.

“Actually, I’m the one who should be thanking Ji Ning.” Adept Mu laughed calmly.

“Ji Ning?” Ninefire and Ishwin looked towards Ning.

A look of worry appeared on Ning’s face, and he immediately said, “I learned that Mother is gravely ill, so I invited Adept Mu to come to our West Prefecture City...”

“Snow is right inside the room.” Ishwin suddenly realized, and he

immediately spoke out.

Adept Mu Xiao nodded, then walked towards the nearby room. Ning and Ishwin followed behind, while Ning asked softly while walking, “Father, what happened? How could Mother suddenly have fallen ill?”

“It was that illness left behind in the past.” Ishwin said. “I’ll explain to you in detail later.”

After entering the room, they had the maidservants leave. Aside from Snow, who was lying on the bed, only Adept Mu, Ning, Ishwin, and Ninefire were present.

Yuchi Snow opened her eyes, looking at the newcomers. She couldn’t help but reveal a trace of puzzlement in her eyes.

“Snow, this is Adept Mu, whom Ning asked to come.” Ishwin said hurriedly.

Hearing this, Snow immediately used her arms to prop herself up. “Yuchi Snow greets you, Adept.”

“Give me your right hand.” Adept Mu sat down on the stone bench next to the bed.

Snow extended her rather ashen right hand. She saw, now, that standing by the side of Adept Mu was Ning. She looked at her son...and as she did, a look of delight appeared on Snow’s face.

Adept Mu stretched out with a single finger, gently tapping it on Snow’s wrist. Immediately, a spot of green light, filled with life energy, spread out, quickly enveloping Snow’s entire body. Ning and Ishwin, seated nearby and watching, felt restlessness in their hearts. After waiting for a good long while, Adept Mu began to frown. “Strange. Strange.”

Ning, hearing this, felt nervousness in his heart. He hurriedly asked, “Adept, my Mother, she...?”

Still frowning, Adept Mu said, “Although I’m not specialized in medicine, I can tell that your Mother doesn’t have any sickness. Rather, her lifeforce

has been almost entirely used up...given how little lifeforce your mother has left in her body, she'll most likely be able to live just three more months."

"Her lifeforce has nearly been used up?" Ning's face changed.

"When my wife was pregnant, she was injured." The nearby Ishwin said hurriedly. "Afterwards, she then used a secret technique which spent her own vitality to protect the fetus."

Adept Mu nodded. "Your wife was originally a Xiantian lifeform, and judging from the purity of the remnants of Ki in her body, she should have been a peak Xiantian lifeform. Unfortunately...that injury she suffered should have been a severe one. Her dantian was destroyed, and logically speaking, she shouldn't have been able to preserve the fetus. Your wife used a secret technique to ignite her own lifeforce in order to protect the fetus, but the cost of this secret technique was extremely great. To replenish what the usage of it cost is almost impossible."

Hearing this, Ning was flabbergasted.

His mother had been a peak Xiantian expert? Her dantian had been destroyed, and she had used a secret technique to ignite her own lifeforce to protect the fetus?

However, from what he had seen from when his mother had taught him footwork, she was indeed an expert. However, that year when he had been in his mother's womb, what exactly had happened? His parents had always intentionally hidden the truth of what had happened when his mother was pregnant from Ning, refusing to tell him.

"Adept, please save my mother." Ning said frantically.

"To save her, the only method is to extend her lifespan." Adept Mu sighed. "There are plenty of spirit pills for curing diseases, and I myself have spirit pills that can be used for Immortal practitioners to extend their lifespan. But unfortunately...to let a mortal have an extended lifespan is thousands of times more difficult than to have an Immortal practitioner extend their lifespans. This sort of medicine is something which I, in the Raindragon Guards, have only heard of. I don't even know where to find

them. Most likely, only Immortals would be able to produce them.”

The nearby Ninefire, hearing this, was shocked. Raindragon Guards?

“Immortals!” Hearing this, Ning felt as though his heart had suddenly turned to ice.

Chapter 8: Learning Acceptance

Adept Mu Xiao left that very day for Stillwater City. Before leaving, he pulled Ji Ning aside to give him advice in private. “Ji Ning, your talent is extremely high. It is guaranteed that you will walk far on the path of Immortals! Immortal practitioners have very long lifespans. Unless his friends and family are also Immortal practitioners, you will have to watch as all of them die of old age. Actually, this is a form of self-improvement with regards to your mind towards the Dao. Since you have become an Immortal practitioner...you need to be prepared. No matter how much pain you suffer, you must escape from the midst of your grief. Otherwise, it will be very hard for you to overcome the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations.”

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After Adept Mu left, Ji Ninefire also immediately headed towards the mountain where Bei Zishan had hidden himself. That place, after all, had Flood Dragon Dao Battle-Armor.

Ning travelled by himself to Serpentwing Lake.

“There’s still hope. My mother still has hope for surviving.” Ning ran through the mountainous, forested wilderness, occasionally using his Windwing Evasion to advance. His running speed was far faster than the travelling speed of those black beasts, and after expending a large majority of his divine power, he managed to arrive at Serpentwing Lake in just two hours.

“That ancient Aquatic Manor has had multiple masters. The Juhua Immortal was the third master. Ignoring the other masters, the Juhua Immortal himself had lived for millions of years as a Loose Immortal. He definitely had quite a few medicines, and perhaps some of them are able to allow mortals to have extended lifespans.” Ning ran across the surface of the water to the island.

“Young master.”

“Greetings, young master.”

There were quite a few people on the island, who had arrived long ago to build a residence there. Autumn Leaf and that young child, Bluestone, were there as well. Seeing Ning run in their direction across the surface of the water, they immediately went to welcome him.

“I have something to do. You can retire for now.” Ning instructed, then immediately transformed into a blur, disappearing from their field of vision. This caused Autumn Leaf and the other servants to feel rather puzzled.

Ning soon arrived at the entrance to the cave. He continuously went deeper in, and after a few moments, he arrived at the place where he had been teleported away from last time.

“Senior.”

Ning called out frantically. “Quick, let me enter the estate. I have something important to do.”

The dark tunnel caverns were completely silent. There was no response at all. This caused Ning to be all the more frantic. The old black bull had originally said...that Ning should only return after he had bound the control talisman. But currently, he was just an early Xiantian lifeform. How long would it be before he would become a Zifu Disciple? His mother only had three months left. He had no other options, besides coming here and begging!

“Senior, I truly have an urgent matter involving life-and-death. I sincerely implore you, Senior, to let me in.” Ning begged frantically.

Silence.

Rumble...

Suddenly, the surrounding space twisted, and in the cavernous area in front of him, an enormous bear’s head once more appeared. The bear’s head opened its giant mouth, swallowing Ning within it, and Ning disappeared from within the estate.

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Spacetime twisted...and then all was calm.

Ning stared in front of him. In front of him was that majestic, ancient palace hall, in the center of which were those incomparably enormous prayer mats. An old black bull ambled over and let out a sigh. “Ji Ning, didn’t I tell you to wait until you bound the control talisman, at which point you would be able to naturally sense the Aquatic Manor and come as you pleased? You are just a Xiantian lifeform. Why have you entered again?”

“Senior.” Ning said hurriedly. “My mother is gravely ill. I truly have no other methods, so I came here to beg.”

“Your mother is gravely ill?” The old black bull shook his head. “Since you have chosen the path of Immortals, you need to be prepared for these things.”

Ning hurriedly shook his head. “Senior, my mother is still young. She shouldn’t die so soon! Previously, I asked a Wanxiang Adept to help take a look at my mother...and that Wanxiang Adept said that my mother, in the past, had used a secret technique to expend her own lifeforce to rescue me. By now, her lifeforce is almost completely used up, and she only has three months of life left. To save my mother, a medicinal pill that can allow mortals to extend their lifespans is necessary. However, that Wanxiang Adept himself had only heard of such pills, and said that most likely only Immortals were in possession of them. I have no other choices, and so I came to the Aquatic Manor.”

“A medicinal pill that can allow mortals to extend their lifespans?” The old black bull sighed. “That is something that can be described as an Immortal pill. Generally speaking, only Loose Immortals or Earthly Immortals can produce such a thing.”

“The Juhua Immortal was no ordinary Loose Immortal. He definitely has this sort of medicinal pill, right?” Ning asked frantically.

The old black bull looked at Ning, then shook its head. “The Juhua Immortal had been alive for millions of years. His family and friends had died long ago. He had no need of such pills, and so he didn’t have any of

them.”

Ning’s heart trembled.

“Then...” Ning said hurriedly. “I imagine the Juhua Immortal must have left behind quite a few magic treasures. Give me a magic treasure which has a valuable comparable to that of an Immortal pill, and I’ll take it and trade...”

As soon as he said the words, Ning knew that he was making a mistake.

He cared too much about his mother’s life, and so he had lost his bearings and equanimity. Even his words lacked propriety.

“Foolishness!” The old black bull shouted. “You yourself said just now that even a Wanxiang Adept has only heard of this sort of Immortal pill. You want to trade for it? With who? You, a Xiantian lifeform, hold a magic treasure on that level? If you show it off, most likely those powerful Immortal practitioners will just kill you for it. Trade for it? If you don’t have enough power, how will you trade?”

“In addition! You haven’t even bound the control talisman, and the only place in the Aquatic Manor you can enter is just the main palace. You aren’t even able to enter the other places. On what basis am I supposed to hand over one of the magic treasures the Juhua Immortal left behind?” The old black bull shook his head. “And what’s more, this isn’t even my decision to make.”

“Not your decision to make?” Ning was stunned. “Then...”

The old black bull sighed. “I’m just the spirit of a magic treasure the Juhua Immortal always kept on him! The true controller of this Aquatic Manor is the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor!”

“Spirit of the Aquatic Manor?” Ning was puzzled.

The old black bull explained, “The entire Aquatic Manor was forged by the first master, who was incredibly mysterious. Even the Juhua Immortal himself felt that this Aquatic Manor has secrets which even he had been unable to discover. The Spirit of the Aquatic Manor...has been carrying out the laws and rules set forth by the first master. It won’t violate the rules in

the slightest.”

“Teleport someone outside into this place? The Spirit of the Aquatic Manor can do that. But allow you to go to other places within the manor? Without binding the Aquatic Manor, that definitely will not be permitted.” The old black bull said. “It also cannot possibly give you one of the Juhua Immortal’s magic treasures. After all, it is the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor. It will definitely obey the orders of the first master of the manor.”

Ning was stunned.

“When, for example, the fourth master died in the outside world, the Spirit of the Aquatic Manor would at most act to find the next master.” The old black bull shook his head. “We spirits of magic treasures are different from you humans. You can change. But we will definitely respect the will of our master.”

Ning understood. Magic treasures were covered with all sorts of runes and bindings. For example, some golems which were forged...even long after the death of their master, the golems would still obey their original orders. The same was true for dwelling-type magic treasures. After the owner of a dwelling died, the rules the owner had set down would still be obeyed by the spirit of the dwelling.

When he understood this, Ning felt despair, deep within his heart.

The old black bull looked towards Ning. “On the path of Immortals, you will see your family and friends die of age, one after the other. You will also see some friends die in battle...you will have to learn how to accept these things! Go, now!”

Whoosh!

An enormous illusory bear’s head appeared, engulfing Ning within its mouth.

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Ning returned to West Prefecture city. Returned to the side of his mother. By now, it was already late at night.

“Ning.” Yuchi Snow, lying on the bed, saw her son. Her eyes immediately lit up. “Where did you go? I couldn’t find you.”

“Mother.” Ning hurriedly walked forward, half-kneeling by her side. He held his mother’s hand. “I went out for a trip. However, I won’t make any more trips. I’ll accompany you and stay by your side.”

Snow gently stroked her son’s hair. She laughed, “It’s fine. If you are busy, do what you need to do. Just remember to come visit your mother.”

“Alright.” Ning nodded gently, and as he did, he couldn’t help but shed tears.

The only thing he could do now was accompany his mother for the final three months. This was the only filial act he could now do.

.....

Night.

His mother had already fallen asleep. Ji Ishwin and Ji Ning, father and son, were within a hall.

“Father.” Ning looked towards his father. “It is time to tell me, I think, what exactly happened in the past.”

Ishwin looked at his son, and as he did, he thought of what Blindfish and the others had said regarding what Ning had done in the mountain. He understood that his son had grown up. Sighing, he said, “That year, your mother was pregnant. Your mother and I thus decided to return to the Ji clan. At that time, your maternal uncle was worried, so he escorted and protected us on the way back.”

“Maternal uncle?” Ning had never before heard that he had an uncle.

“Your uncle’s name was Yuchi Mount.” Ishwin’s eyes had a hint of memory within them. “Your uncle was exceedingly intelligent, and he also knew how to treat others. He had many friends. He had also become a Zifu Disciple early on. If it weren’t because he wanted to escort myself and your mother back, your uncle probably would’ve had a chance at restoring and reestablishing the Yuchi clan. Unfortunately, your uncle died. He died

for the sake of protecting the three of us. All three of our lives, we have because your uncle gave up his own! This great debt...is hard to repay!"

Ning, hearing this, felt a heavy feeling.

An uncle! Yuchi Mount!

He had never heard of this name. This moment was deeply engraved into Ning's heart.

"I've only heard that your uncle had a daughter, your maternal cousin. Unfortunately, I have no idea where your cousin is." Ishwin shook his head and sighed. "I'm unable to repay him. Unable to repay him..."

"What exactly happened? Who harmed and killed my uncle, and also caused the roots of her illness?" Ning immediately asked. "Who was it?"

Chapter 9: Warmth

Ji Ishwin looked at his son. After hesitating, he said, “All I can tell you is that he is a disciple of Snowdragon Mountain, and that his grandfather is a Summit Master of one of their mountain summits, an individual on the Primordial Daoist level.”

Ning’s face changed.

Primordial Daoist?

“He himself is just a Zifu Disciple and not worthy of being afraid of.” Ishwin shook his head. “But behind him stands a Primordial Daoist...we truly cannot irritate him! If we struggle against him, the only result will be the extermination of the entire Ji clan. This is why your mother and I have never mentioned this, nor said a single word regarding this in front of you. Ever since that, after your mother and I stealthily returned to the Ji clan, we have always remained very low-key. However, most likely that person didn’t hold your mother and I in any regard at all.

Ishwin looked at his son. “You are now an adult, and you are very talented. According to what that Adept Mu said, it is possible that you might one day join the Raindragon Guards. This is why I have told you these things. Otherwise...I had planned to never tell you.”

“What is he called?” Ning pursued this line of questioning.

“Once you become a Wanxiang Adept, I will tell you.” Ishwin said. “If I were to die, your Uncle White will tell you. That year, your Uncle White risked his life to carry your mother and flee. He saved your life, and he knew exactly what happened that year.”

Ning said frantically, “You can’t tell me now?”

“What good would it be if I did tell you?” Ishwin barked. “Will you go seek revenge? That’s just looking for death! First be patient and endure. After enduring for a few years, you’ll have calmed down as well.”

“Remember”!

Ishwin stared at Ning. “Don’t let hatred cloud your eyes. In this vast,

endless world, slaughter and hatred is omnipresent. It is guaranteed that you will one day leave Swallow Mountain. In the vast world outside, those major schools, clans, and powerful sects are all hard to deal with. Snowdragon Mountain is nothing more than a millstone for you to sharpen your blade on, during your path to becoming an Immortal!"

Ning nodded slightly.

"On your hopes rest the future of both the Ji clan and the Yuchi clan, understood?" Ishwin said. "To become famous throughout this boundless world, and to make Snowdragon Mountain as well as the various other powers all lower their heads and submit to you; this is what your mother and I hope to see the most!"

"Yes." Ning nodded solemnly.

"Make your mother and me proud of you!" Ishwin stared at his son. "My son!"

.....

The autumn wind blew. Dry leaves fell.

Yuchi Snow was seated on a long bench in front of her room. The beast fur pelt laid on the bench was warm and soft. There was a layer of beast fur on Snow's body as well. Her face was even more ashen now. She held her son's hand, then turned to say towards Ishwin, who was standing next to her, "Ishwin, bring those beast furs over."

"Alright." Ishwin immediately entered the room, quickly returning while carrying a pile of beast fur clothes.

"This is...?" Ning looked at the beast fur clothes.

Ishwin said, "Your mother hasn't had anything to do in recent days, and so she's been sewing these beast fur clothes. Every single thread and stitch is the labor of your mother's hands." Seated there, Snow said softly, "There's quite a few by now. I only made twelve sets of clothes in the past three months. They are all suitable for your current size and stature. In the future, Mother won't be able to be by your side, but these clothes will accompany you."

Ning's eyes stung, and he couldn't refrain from tearing up.

"Don't cry." Snow gently stroked her son's face. "I know that soon now, I won't be able to last any longer."

"Mother!" Ning's voice was trembling.

"Mother has experienced many things in this life." Snow said slowly. "When I was an infant, I lived in a large clan with unlimited, glorious prospects. When I was young, I fled alongside my Father, eventually meeting your father and adventuring alongside him, braving danger. Afterwards, I lived ten peaceful years at the Ji clan...in my life, I've had a father who loved me, older brothers and sisters who loved me, a man who loved me, and you...my most beloved son. I truly feel content."

Ning's tears were coming down nonstop. He couldn't control them, no matter what he tried. The only thing he could do was continuously hold his mother's hand. His mother's hand was no longer smooth; it had become rough and leathery, like a dry leaf without any vitality.

Snow said slowly, "In your body is the bloodline of the Ji clan, as well as the bloodline of my Yuchi clan. For your mother to have had you...is your mother's greatest pride in life."

"Mother..." Ning stared at his mother.

"Ning, son...in the future, will you stay for a long time at Serpentwing Lake?" Snow looked at her son.

Ning nodded.

As an Immortal practitioner, one had to have a base, after all. West Prefecture City was too crowded and had too many people. Serpentwing Lake was much calmer. In addition, Serpentwing Lake had the Aquatic Manor...in the future, he would indeed often stay at Serpentwing Lake.

"After I die." Snow looked at Ishwin, by her side. "After I am cremated, spread my ashes over Serpentwing Lake. Ishwin, you won't be jealous, will you?"

Ishwin's eyes were moist. He forced out a laugh. "Slightly jealous,

actually. However, after I die, my ashes will also be spread over Serpentwing Lake. By then, we'll be together again, right?"

Snow laughed.

Ishwin gently embraced his wife.

"Ning, son." Snow's voice was growing weaker. She smiled. "I want to look at our Yuchi clan's Windwing Evasion. Demonstrate it for me."

"Yes, Mother." Ning rose to his feet.

Behind him, out of nowhere, a pair of wings appeared. And then, forcibly resisting the pain in his heart, Ning began to execute the Windwing Evasion. Ning moved about like a giant Roc, gliding through the air, landing atop of a distant roof, and then with another flash, gliding to another place. His two wings trembled, and his movements were like that of an illusion.

Ning, in this moment, was whole-heartedly focusing on displaying the Windwing Evasion, because this was the last request of his mother.

"Wind!"

"Wind!"

As Ning displayed it, the wind blew against him, like his mother's hand gently stroking his face. The touch of the wind was a caress of someone who didn't want to let go.

Slowly...

Ning's movements became all the more marvelous, and he seemed to have truly become a giant Roc, moving all the more faster and all the more freely, incomparably agile.

He was a giant Roc, a giant Roc who flew in the skies beyond the Nine Heavens. Ning, unconsciously, was unconsciously incorporating that insights he had gained that night into the True Meaning of the Wind, and merging it with the Windwing Evasion. He even incorporated some deep emotions into them, like a bird who was longing for the wind.

"The great Roc." Snow's eyes lit up as she watched, and she murmured

softly, “The great Roc...”

She seemed to have seen her older brother.

That tall, stalwart man who had protected and cherished her since she was young. Her brother’s usage of the Windwing Evasion was so similar to the way in which Ning’s Windwing Evasion looked...

“Big Brother...” Snow seemed to have returned to the past.

A large courtyard. Her older brother was there, training in the Windwing Evasion, while her, as a toddler, was running around calling out, “Big Brother, Big Brother.”

“Little Sis.” That man, as tall and mighty as a mountain, turned to look at her.

“Big Sis, Father.” She saw two more figures, one an elegant middle-aged man with a long beard, while the other was a seemingly cold and arrogant young woman. This was her father and her older sister.

“Big Brother. Big Sis. Father...I’m coming.”

The child-Snow ran forward, ran to the side of her older brother, her older sister, and her father. Together again. They were finally together again...

.....

Lying in Ishwin’s arms, Snow closed her eyes.

A peaceful smile was on her face.

“Ahh...ahhhh....aaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Ishwin opened his mouth, making some noise, but wasn’t able to speak. He tightly clutched his wife, raising his head high, but the tears still came spilling out.

The distant Ning came to a halt. His entire body trembling, he took one step forward after another, walking towards his mother’s side, then kneeling down.

“Mother!” Ning began to sob, a rumbling, heart-broken sound.

.....

The sound spread outside of the courtyard. The servants outside, hearing the sobs of their young master Ji Ning, filled with such agony, misery, and sadness, immediately understood that their mistress had already died. All of them couldn't help but to lower their heads, their tears spilling out. They would never forget this benevolent mistress of theirs.

.....

Ning left West Prefecture City, going to live on the island in Serpentwing Lake.

According to the dying wishes of his mother, he personally scattered her ashes within the waters of Serpentwing Lake. From that day onward, Ning gained a new hobby. He liked to lie down atop a small boat, allowing the boat to drift freely in the waters of Serpentwing Lake.

It was like...

Lying in the embrace of his mother. So very warm.

Chapter 10: Unfathomably Deep

Time flowed on like water, silent and soundless. In the blink of an eye, nearly five years passed.

Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

Brightheart was the name which Ji Ning had given this island in the center of the lake. The island had multiple buildings constructed atop it, and the formerly desolate island had been made into a beautiful place, like an unearthly utopia. It was currently at the changing of seasons from spring to summer, and all sorts of flowers were blooming and eye-catching. After careful arrangements by some servants, they appeared all the more beautiful and captivating.

“Big Sis Autumn Leaf, Big Sis Autumn Leaf.” A youth dressed in blue clothes ran over while shouting.

Autumn Leaf, who had been boiling a kettle of tea, turned to look. Laughing, she said, “Bluestone, your archery lessons have concluded? Did your Master Blindfish rebuke you?”

“This...” Bluestone rubbed his head and said resignedly, “How can I not be rebuked? Each time I practice archery, Master Blindfish will always lecture me. He’ll also often compare me to Big Bro. But how can I compare to Big Bro? You know what a genius he is!”

“You need to treasure this chance.” Autumn Leaf viewed Bluestone as she might her own little brother. She said seriously, “Young master himself said that although Master Blindfish had his dantian destroyed, that just made him become even more focused on archery...and his archery abilities have risen to a whole new level. It’s only because Master Blindfish is living here on Brightheart Island and because the young master asked him to do so that he is willing to teach you. You need to work hard. If you master it, it will be a consummate technique for you.”

Bluestone immediately nodded. “I understand.”

Bluestone’s life on Brightheart Island was quite carefree. Ning whole-

heartedly treated him as he would a little brother, and acted towards him as an older brother would. One could tell how close their relationship was, just by the way Bluestone addressed him; generally speaking, a younger individual would address a more senior one as 'Elder Brother'. Only someone who grew up together and thus were very close to each other would use the term 'Big Bro'.

"Right." Autumn Leaf laughed and nodded.

"Where is Big Bro Ji Ning?" Bluestone asked. "Training with the sword?"

Autumn Leaf laughed, "He's not training the sword."

"Oh. Then he's sleeping on Serpentwing Lake." Bluestone laughed. After having lived on Serpentwing Lake for five years, he had become well acquainted with Ning's habits. Ning, aside from training with the sword, spent most of his time casually drifting on Serpentwing Lake aboard a small boat while napping.

"Right. He's sleeping." Autumn Leaf turned to look towards that boundless lake as well.

Bluestone couldn't help but say, "Originally, I asked Big Bro Ji Ning why he is always sleeping on Serpentwing Lake. Big Bro just said...he is training. I don't get it. How can sleeping atop Serpentwing Lake be training? But Big Bro Ji Ning's swordplay really is becoming increasingly more powerful. Two years ago, Commander Ishwin acknowledged that he didn't believe he could beat him!"

"Right. The young master's swordplay has reached an unfathomably high level." Autumn Leaf sighed. "I once watched the young master train with the sword, and when I did, I saw some aquatic birds flew over en masse, then fly around him in a circle for some time, unwilling to leave."

"So bizarre!" Bluestone was surprised.

"In the past, Commander Ishwin would spar once with the young master every year. Two years ago, when he felt he wouldn't be able to win, he stopped coming. Unfortunately, the young master forbade me from watching, so I don't know how what the battle scene between the

Commander and the young master was like.” Autumn Leaf felt a hint of longing. In her eyes, the swordplay of Ji Ishwin had reached a mythical level long ago, but her young master’s swordplay had apparently reached an even higher, deeper level.

Ishwin lived on Brightheart Island as well. However, it was on the other end of Brightheart Island. He normally was a solitary, arrogant figure, forbidding anyone from approaching him, and without any servants serving him. Only Ning was permitted to go to his residence to accompany Ishwin, his father.

“I’m truly curious. What level has Big Bro reached in swordplay, exactly?” Bluestone’s eyes were filled with veneration.

“Look.” Autumn Leaf suddenly looked towards the lake.

“Huh?” Bluestone turned to look as well.

In the distance, a single boat could be faintly seen. At first, a look of delight appeared on Bluestone’s face as he took it for the boat on which Ning slept, but when he looked more closely...he saw that this was a large ship, the one which often delivered people to and from the shores of the lake. After all, quite a few people were now living on Brightheart Island, with nearly a hundred servants being present. Large amounts of food would often be delivered to the island, and some outsiders would come visit. Naturally, they had to have this ferry.

Atop the ferry.

There was a group of youths atop the ferry, and they were chatting and joking amongst themselves.

“The Central Prefecture Lord told us to come pay our respects to Ji Ning.” A big, burly-chested youth had a hint of disgruntlement in his eyes. “We are the Central Prefecture of the Ji clan. We are far more powerful than the other four Prefectures! The six of us are the most powerful members of the younger generation of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. To have us come spar with this Ji Ning is one thing, but he actually said that we were to come ‘pay our respect’ and have this Ji Ning ‘provide guidance to us’? And that we had to be reverential towards him?”

“Shut your mouth.” A handsome looking youth said. “The Central Prefecture Lord stated that we must be respectful and that we must address him as young master Ji Ning.”

“Fine, fine. Young master Ji Ning.” The big youth couldn’t refrain from adding, “That’s fine for the rest of us, but Ji Mo, you are the number one, ultimate genius amongst the younger generation of our Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. You became a Xiantian expert at age fifteen, and reached the level of mastery long ago in the ultimate technique of our Ji clan, the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords]. That Ji Ning...although that young master Ji Ning became a Xiantian expert a few years earlier than you, the two of you will simply spar at most. How can you be asked to ‘pay your respects’ to him and have him ‘provide guidance’ to you?”

“Ji Mo.” A black haired woman said. “Tongzhan speaks the truth. The instructions the Central Prefecture Lord gave us, none of us will openly oppose, but in our hearts, none of us truly submit either. We are the most talented youths of the Central Prefecture, while that Ji Ning...that young master Ji Ning is only the most talented youth of the West Prefecture. No matter how much of a genius he is, at most he’ll be a bit more powerful than us. How can he be qualified to have us ‘go pay our respects’ to him?”

“Enough, all of you.”

The handsome youth’s gaze was like water. He swept everyone with his gaze, and the other five youths all fell silent.

Ji Mo was, without question, the number one figure in the younger generation of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture. In addition, ever since he had been young, he had followed by the side of Granny Shadow, and thus Mo’s status was all the more unique...many people were certain that Mo would be the next Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan of the Central Prefecture.

“You all know that I follow Granny Shadow.” Mo said slowly.

“Right.” Looks of awe appeared in the eyes of the other five.

Granny Shadow...

In the entire Ji clan, there were two people who stood at the very pinnacle of the clan. One was the Patriarch, Ji Ninefire! The other was Granny Shadow! Granny Shadow was the sibling and younger sister of Ninefire, an old granny who had also lived for nearly four centuries. But, without question, she had been at the Zifu Disciple level for three hundred years.

The two of them were the two publicly acknowledged Zifu Disciples of the Ji clan.

As for whether or not there were other Zifu Disciples hidden in the shadows, that was hard to say. A clan would naturally want to hide some cards up their sleeves, interchanging truth and lies. This led to longevity.

“Granny Shadow personally taught me swordplay.” Mo said softly. “My swordplay, compared to Granny Shadow’s, is unimaginably weaker. Do you know why the six of us have been sent by the Central Prefecture Lord to Serpentwing Lake to pay our respects to Ji Ning?”

“I hear the North Prefecture, the East Prefecture, and the South Prefecture had already sent their younger generation members over to pay their respects to young master Ji Ning, and so our Central Prefecture sent the six of us as well.”

“Wrong.”

Ji Mo shook his head lightly.

“Our Central Prefecture is the root of the Ji clan. The Patriarch and Granny Shadow are both within our Central Prefecture.” Mo said. “The territory that our Central Prefecture takes up is the greatest, and the number of Xiantian experts we have far surpasses the number the other four prefectures have. Even the Crimson Guards are stationed in our Central Prefecture. Why, then, must our Central Prefecture act in the same manner as the other prefectures?”

“Then what’s the reason?” They all looked towards Mo.

Mo said softly, “The reason is, one year ago, Granny Shadow made a trip here to Serpentwing Lake.”

“Granny Shadow came to Serpentwing Lake?” The other five youths instantly began to think of many possibilities.

Mo said, “The Patriarch had once praised young master Ji Ning highly, saying that in the future, he would definitely be the number one expert of our Ji clan! Granny Shadow thus decided to come here to Serpentwing Lake to personally see what sort of ability this Ji Ning had...”

“And?”

“What did Granny Shadow say?” The five youths looked expectantly at Mo.

Mo’s eyes had a very strange light to them. He said slowly, “After Granny Shadow returned, I repeatedly asked her how I was in comparison to young master Ji Ning. The only thing Granny Shadow would say was that it was hard to compare. That it was hard to compare. I kept on asking her what level of swordplay this young master Ji Ning had reached, and Granny Shadow just replied with a single phrase; ‘unfathomably deep!’”

“Unfathomably deep!” The five youths were stunned. For even Granny Shadow to say such a thing...how terrifying was Ji Ning’s swordplay?

“Everyone, time to disembark.” A sailor said loudly.

Only now did the six of them look over. The ferry had already neared the shore, and from afar, various buildings arose within their vision, an amazingly beautiful sight. The six of them couldn’t help but sigh in amazement in their hearts, while Ji Mo’s eyes lit up. “This is where Ji Ning lives?”

Chapter 11: Ji Ning's Sword

The six youths from the Ji clan's Central Prefecture disembarked. From the island, four figures walked over, the leader being a beautiful woman dressed in simple, plain clothes. By her side was a youth dressed in blue, while two Crimson Guards followed them from the side. There were a total of a hundred Crimson Guards on the island, which Ji Ninefire had especially stationed here.

"I imagine you are Manager Autumn Leaf." Ji Mo, the leader of the six youths, extended his hand, and within it, a beast skin appeared which had some words written atop it. "We are here at the commands of our Central Prefecture Lord, and we have come to pay our respects to young master Ji Ning."

"Oh?" Autumn Leaf accepted the beast skin parchment and glanced at it.

All of the various matters pertaining to Brightheart Island were under Autumn Leaf's control, and she had been appointed as the General Manager by Ji Ning.

Autumn Leaf carefully read through the beast skin parchment, then lifted her head and smiled. "We had already received the news previously and had been informed that six outstanding talents of the Central Prefecture were coming. Everyone, please follow me."

"We have come to pay our respects to young master Ji Ning. Might I ask when young master Ji Ning will be able to see us?"

While following Autumn Leaf, the six youths asked this question.

Autumn Leaf just said, "Everyone, don't be hasty. You will definitely see the young master today."

Soon, the six youths were led to a quiet, reclusive residence which was specially used for receiving guests. Autumn Leaf instructed a pair of maidservants, "These six are our esteemed guests from the Central Prefecture. Take good care of them."

"Yes." The two maidservants acknowledged.

“Everyone.” Autumn Leaf looked at the six of them and laughed. “Once our young master has time, I will definitely come inform the six of you. Everyone, you must be tired from your journey. You can rest here for now.”

After speaking, Autumn Leaf led Bluestone and the others away.

“Hmph, people of high status really are troublesome!” The tall, muscular youth, Ji Tongzhan, was so angry his eyes bulged. “What could this young master Ji Ning possibly be worrying about, living here in such a secluded, quiet little lake island? This female manager even said ‘when our young master has free time’. Jeeze...they really hold us in no regard at all.”

“The Central Prefecture ordered someone to convey the letter long ago to inform them of our arrival. It’s one thing for young master Ji Ning to not come welcome us, but he won’t even let us know when he will meet with us, and instead just has us wait here like fools?”

These youths were all the talented, favored sons of heaven.

Although they believed that Ji Ning was one level stronger than them, they were still people of the same age. For them to be slighted like this... they were rather unhappy.

“Endure it!” Ji Mo just sat there and called out to them quietly. “We are here to pay our respects. Thus, wait here obediently for young master Ji Ning to summon us.”

“We’re just discontent, that’s all.”

“Right. Everyone talks about how powerful young master Ji Ning is, but none of us have ever met him. He’s only sixteen years old. How powerful can he be?” These youths all chatted amongst themselves. Even Ji Mo, seated there, in his bones had the untamed arrogance inherent to all geniuses. What one heard didn’t matter. What one saw was what really mattered!

Until he personally witnessed Ji Ning’s abilities, in Mo’s heart, he too had a small ball of fiery anger that was currently smoldering.

.....

The sun had already set, and the night fog had covered the entire western horizons. The setting sun's red glow covered the earth, causing the surface of Serpentwing Lake to appear as beautiful as a painting. Far away on the surface of the lake in this 'painting', a small boat was swaying as the water pushed it forward.

"It's the young master's boat."

"It's the young master."

The maidservants had noticed long ago, and they had immediately informed Manager Autumn Leaf. Autumn Leaf and Bluestone quickly arrived on the beach, staring at that distant little boat.

Within the boat.

Ning was comfortably lying there, his eyes shut. The lake around him was completely silent, as silent as a painting. Suddenly, he could vaguely sense the auras of many people in the distance, and as he did, his eyelids twitched, then opened.

"I'm here." Ning immediately stood up, stretching lazily.

He was still dressed in those beast fur clothes. However, these were formed from the transformation of a protective magic-treasure...after all, he only had a few sets of beast fur clothes which his mother had sown for him. If he always wore them, they would eventually be ruined. Ning couldn't bear for that to happen, and so he stored them away. However, he still changed the appearance of his armor-type magic treasure into beast furs. He felt the most comfortable dressed in them anyhow.

"Splash." The speed of the boat suddenly increased rapidly, and it broke through the waves, advancing at high speed, charging towards the distant island.

Ning stood there atop the little boat, smiling as he greeted his Autumn Leaf and Bluestone.

When the boat drew near the island, it actually disappeared. Ning walked atop the waves, arriving at the beach.

“Young master.” Autumn Leaf laughed as she went to welcome him.

“Big Bro Ji Ning.” Bluestone immediately ran over as well, saying excitedly, “Today, six youths of the Central Prefecture came. They act so high and mighty and look down on people so much, they might as well have their eyes growing from the tops of their heads.”

Ning seemed to have thought of something. “Oh? This is that group of the most talented youths of the Central Prefecture?”

“Right.” Autumn Leaf nodded. “They arrived at noon.”

“Have them come to the sword training field.” Ning laughed. “Since the Central Prefecture had them come, their intention is for me to give these youths a sound beating.”

“Alright. I’ll go invite them right now.” Autumn Leaf immediately said.

.....

The sword training field.

This was a wide area of more than three hundred meters, located in front of Ning’s residence. This was the place where Ning usually trained with the sword.

“I’ve already drunk five bottles of water. It’s almost night. He’s finally willing to meet us.”

“This Ji Ning has been made out to be a near legendary figure. I wonder what he’s actually like.”

The six men and women spoke to each other softly, all clearly quite excited. They were filled with boundless curiosity towards this legendary young master Ji Ning. Autumn Leaf led the way from up front, and they soon arrived at the sword training field. “The young master is there. You can go there.”

Ji Mo and the other six looked over carefully.

In the distance, a youth dressed in beast furs could be seen standing there. From his appearance, he wasn’t too tall; he was still at the same height he had been when he had broken through to become a Xiantian

expert. Only, for some reason...just by standing there, Ning seemed to have become one with the surrounding area, as though the entire scene was one in a painting.

The beast fur clad youth suddenly turned, leaving that earlier state of seeming to be a person in a painting. He seemed to have transformed into an Adept. Actually, before this, Ning had fused his soul with the world and was meditating on the 'Dao'! Ever since he had moved to live on Serpentwing Lake, especially after he began to rest there on that little boat and casually drift on the surface of the lake each day, his entire soul had become incomparably peaceful and calm, and incomparably close to nature.

At the same time, Ning's swordplay had advanced by leaps and bounds. His level had risen nonstop, to the point which by now, Ning was able to infuse the 'Dao' he had learned casually and freely into his techniques. Although there was no way he could completely absorb himself into the Dao, like he had that night by the pool, to train in such a manner...was already inconceivable. This caused his swordplay to reach a truly astonishing level.

"All of you, come over." Ning spoke out.

Mo and the others all looked at this young master Ji Ning. His features were handsome and delicate, like a youth's. Only, he had a natural, reserved aura about him, an aura which one could only achieve after constantly improving upon one's mind and spirit.

"Greetings, young master Ji Ning." Mo and the rest of the six all walked forward and said respectfully.

"I heard that the most talented youth of the Central Prefecture is Ji Mo. Which of you is Ji Mo?" Ning said directly. Since he was to give them a beating, he might as well just pick the strongest one. This would be more effective.

"Me." Mo said, his eyes fierce.

Ning nodded. "What do you train in?"

“The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords]!” Mo’s eyes held great confidence within them. “I just mastered it. I hope young master Ji Ning will provide me with some guidance.”

“Mastered?” Ning nodded. “The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] is an ultimate technique which guards our entire clan, and is extremely marvelous. Take out your sword and use your most powerful sword attack against me. Let me see exactly how well you use the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords].”

“Alright.” Mo drew out his icy longsword. The longsword had some faint runes atop it. Clearly, this was a weapon-type magic treasure. Mo shouted out, “Young master Ji Ning, be careful.”

Swish!

Instantly, the sword transformed into countless illusions, all of which appeared and swept forward towards Ning.

Ning just stood there, watching. Just as those countless sword illusions enveloped him, he stretched out a finger and lightly tapped. “Break!” Immediately, all of the sword illusions vanished, with the true form of the longsword appearing. Tapped by Ning’s finger, the longsword which had flying towards Ning at high speed suddenly flew away on its own power.

“This...this...” Mo stared in shock, his eyes wide. The other five youths were completely stunned as well. Just by relying on his finger, he was able to flick away a sword which contained the power of the world? And they didn’t feel that Ning’s finger moved very quickly.

“How is that possible...my sword...?” Mo didn’t dare believe it. “Your force clearly wasn’t that great. How could you instantly guide my force away and make my sword fly out?”

“Let me ask you this.” Ning barked. “What techniques does the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] have?”

Mo hurriedly said, “The [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords] has three techniques in total. The ‘One Sword, Ten Thousand Shadows’ stance, the ‘Ten Thousand Swords Become One’, and the ‘Melody of Ten Thousand

Swords'. Amongst them, the 'Melody of Ten Thousand Swords' is the most powerful killing technique. What I used just now was that most powerful technique, the 'Melody of Ten Thousand Swords'!"

Ning said, "Melody of Ten Thousand Swords...Melody of Ten Thousand Swords...the most important part of it isn't the 'ten thousand swords', it is in the word 'melody'!" In recent years, Ji Ninefire had especially arranged for people to send over the various sword and saber techniques the Ji clan possessed, and Ning had flipped through all of them. At Ning's current level, he himself could develop techniques on par with these skills. All he had to do was to get an understanding of their essence.

"Melody?" Mo was awestruck.

"Watch carefully." Ning pointed with his finger, and a ray of sword light solidified, slicing through the air.

Immediately, the sky was filled with sword images, and the countless sword images appeared everywhere, seemingly quite similar to the 'Melody of Ten Thousand Swords' which Mo had just used. But at the same time, these countless, densely clustered sword shadows seemed to form into multiple musical notes, each of which had their own differences. These countless sword shadows actually formed into a single, high-pitched song.

Passion!

Celebration!

Ji Mo and the other six were completely stunned. They could actually sense a sort of joy emanating from those countless sword shadows, which seemed to have a life of their own.

"Watch now." Ning shot out another ray of sword light, once more forming into countless blurry sword shadows. Those countless sword shadows affected each other, each of which seemed to be independent and yet which linked up with the others...the countless musical notes transformed into a song, but this song was filled with boundless killing intent, a killing intent which caused their courage to turn cold.

Every single sword shadow seemed like a soldier, and the countless soldiers were bellowing while charging forward, covering the skies and filling the skies with their killing intent.

The faces of Mo and the other five were completely ashen. They couldn't help but unconsciously retreat.

“Do you see?” The sword light from Ning's finger vanished. “This is the ‘melody’. The soul of the entire sword technique! It doesn't matter what type of soul it is; only with a soul will your ten thousand swords truly become one, and truly become the astonishing sword melody!”

The other five felt utterly astonished.

As for Ji Mo, who had an extremely deep level of accomplishment with regards to the [Melody of Ten Thousand Swords], he was thoroughly convinced and subdued. With a ‘bang’ sound, he immediately knelt down in front of Ning. “Please accept me as your disciple!”

Chapter 12: The World Suddenly Changes

Although Ji Mo had sincerely asked to be allowed to take Ji Ning as his master, how could Ning accept? After all, for a sword technique to have a 'soul', what was required was an understanding of the Dao. This wasn't something that could simply be taught! Ning next provided guidance to the others, one by one. The attitudes of these youths had immediately become incomparably humble. All of them raised issues which had normally puzzled them, and Ning naturally was able to very easily resolve them. Just in terms of sword technique alone, there was no one within the Ji clan who could compare to him.

He spent four full hours providing guidance to them, and afterwards, Ning sent them off.

"Go back and spend some time pondering these things. I won't keep you here any further." After providing guidance, Ning himself left.

The six youths just watched longingly as Ning left. How they wished that Ning could spend some more time giving them guidance!

.....

Night.

Ning was seated in the lotus position on his bed mattress, training. Elemental energy was constantly surging towards him, entering his body and liquefying into Ki. After a long time, when he sensed that his dantian had become somewhat swollen, Ning came to a halt.

"Most likely, within a few more months, I will be able to establish my 'Violet Palace' as a Ki Refiner." Ning said to himself. "However, to reach the Zifu Disciple level as a practitioner of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] will require me to reach the seventh level of that art. I wonder how long it will be before I reach it."

By now, he had already reached the peak of power as a Xiantian lifeform as both a Ki Refiner and as a Fiendgod Body Refiner.

The technique he was using to train as a Ki Refiner was an ordinary

technique of the Ji clan, known as the [Water Element Art]. The quality of the Ki provided by those who trained in this technique was fairly poor, but it was easy to breakthrough to become a Zifu Disciple! Given Ning's current level of understanding regarding the Dao, once the accumulated Ki in his body reached a certain level, he could rely on it to immediately establish his Zifu 'Violet Palace'!

"This [Water Element Art] is a very ordinary technique." Ning said to himself. "It can only allow a person to train to the Zifu Disciple level. After establishing the 'Violet Palace', I'll have to acquire a new Ki Refining technique."

The further a Ki Refining technique allowed one to progress, the more valuable it was.

"When the time comes, I must find a more formidable Ki Refining technique." Ning pondered to himself. "The [Water Element Art] is, in the end, a very superficial technique. If I continue to use this sort of superficial technique in the future...most likely, my development in Ki Refining will come to a halt at the Wanxiang level."

This was the difference between a high class technique and a low class technique!

A high class, hard-to-learn technique was hard to start training in, but it allowed one to begin slowly walking in the right direction, constantly advancing on firm footing.

As for low class techniques, they made it easy for one to establish the 'Violet Palace', and if one went all out, one had the chance to reach the Wanxiang Adept level. But...to become a Primordial Daoist? There was no hope of it whatsoever.

The Ji clan, after all, was a fairly low level clan. It didn't have any high class Fiendgod Body Refining techniques or Ki Refining techniques. It did have the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens] technique, which was unique in that it was widely spread throughout the lands. The other Ki Refining techniques the clan possessed were all very poor; this was why the likes of Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow had been training for nearly

four centuries, but were still at the Zifu Disciple stage.

“I have to go out adventuring.” Ning was rather eager. “I’ll wait to establish my Violet Palace first. By then, I will be better equipped to protect myself. The little power I have right now is still rather insufficient.”

Ning knew his own power quite well.

As a Ki Refiner, he was at the peak Xiantian level; however, half a year ago, he had already become capable of executing the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], and his attack power should have reached the peak Zifu Disciple level! His weakness was that his Ki was used up too quickly, and that he wasn’t able to fight for as long as most Zifu Disciples.

As a Body Refiner, he had reached the peak Xiantian level in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]. He was already comparable to early, ordinary Zifu Disciple level Fiendgod Body Refiners! Given his current lifeforce, even if his skull was pierced through, he still wouldn’t die! Although his attack power was somewhat weaker than that of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], once battle truly began, his body was still the more powerful aspect of the two.

“Although the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] is incomparably sharp...” Ning said to himself. “If I were to encounter a Zifu Disciple who is an Fiendgod Body Refiner and whose body is incomparably durable, even if I can chop through his body with a ray of sword light, his body would quickly heal.”

“Against Zifu level Ki Refiners, I can give them a good fight, even if they are peak Zifu Disciples.”

“But against Fiendgod Body Refiners...I can deal with early stage ones, but anything stronger than that will be hard.” Ning knew this very well. “I wonder what I need to do to breakthrough in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]. Transform Yin and Yang...Blood-Drop Rebirth... what must I do to achieve this?”

Not dying when one’s head was cut through wasn’t much.

But if he could reach the seventh stage of the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], he would possess the ability to regenerate himself from a single drop of blood! Life energy as powerful as this made it extremely hard for other Zifu Ki Refiners to deal with him. To kill an Fiendgod Body Refiner expert...how hard it was! The only way was to slowly exhaust the expert of all his divine power.

“Blood-Drop Rebirth.” Ning was filled with eagerness.

Actually, the current Ning was already an absolute monster. For attack, he had the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]! He had also become a peak Xiantian in the number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique, and even Zifu Disciples would find it hard to kill him! It was hard for others to kill him, but by relying on the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], he could kill others from far away.

“Not enough, not enough. If Bei Zishan’s insect swarms were ten times greater in number, they would still be able to kill me through exhausting my power..” Ning didn’t dare to be the slightest bit incautious.

He still remembered what the old black bull had told him...

That he was not to underestimate any Immortal practitioner! You are formidable, but aren’t others also in possession of formidable techniques?

“Whew.”

Ning shut his eyes, beginning to visualize the [Nuwa Painting]. The visualization of the Nuwa Painting was something he continuously did. The reason he was now able to execute the ninth level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was primarily thanks to the power of his divine will.

.....

The sky slowly brightened.

Ning, seated quietly in the lotus position on his bed, suddenly opened his eyes, frowning as he carefully reached out with his senses.

“Was it just me?” Ning murmured to himself.

“Rumble...” A surge of incomparably powerful elemental energy rippled outwards, washing through Serpentwing Lake in an instant like a huge, roaring wave. This enormously powerful elemental ripple caused Ning’s face to change. Swish! He flew straight out from the window, flying to the crown of a large tree and staring outwards.

“Northward.”

Ning stood there atop the tree’s crown, staring into the distant north. The incomparably savage elemental ripple had come from the north.

It was like the ripple caused by a stone being thrown into a pool of water. In a distant point to the north, incomparably powerful natural, elemental ripples were being cast out in every direction....one ripple after another surged outwards, sweeping out for thousands of kilometers, constantly broadcasting outwards.

“What a terrifying elemental energy ripple.” Ning was amazed and stunned. “To be able to arouse such a powerful elemental aura...the rate at which I absorb elemental energy when training, compared to this ripple, is like the light of a firefly compared to the glorious splendor of the sun and the moon. What is going on? What has caused such a powerful ripple?”

Swoosh!

From another place within the island, a figure flew out, leaping across the tops of some trees and buildings, advancing at high speed. Soon, the figure reached Ning’s side. It was Ji Ishwin, clad in a white beast fur jacket.

“Father.” Ning looked at his father.

“You felt it as well.” Ishwin looked solemnly towards the north.

“Right. The north.” Ning nodded, then said with incomparable solemnity, “A terrifying elemental energy ripple. It was inconceivably strong. Given what I sensed, if I’m not mistaken, this elemental energy ripple should have originated from thousands of kilometers to the north.”

Ishwin nodded as well. “I didn’t sense it as clearly as you did, but the impression I received was essentially the same.”

“Father, what on earth happened to cause such a powerful elemental energy ripple?” Ning hurriedly asked.

“There are many possibilities.” Ishwin said. “It is possible that a duel between Immortals has caused these elemental ripples. It is also possible that an ancient relic site has suddenly emerged! It’s also possible that an Immortal magic treasure has revealed itself!”

Ning’s face changed. “Then our Ji clan...”

The land thousands of kilometers to the north remained the territory of the Ji clan. The West Prefecture City of the Ji clan was to the southwest of the Central Prefecture City. The region thousands of kilometers to the north was one of the centermost areas of the entire Ji clan!

“No matter which of the possibilities it is, it isn’t good for our Ji clan.” Ishwin said in a low voice.

Ning’s face became ugly.

A battle between Immortals? An emergence of a relic site? An Immortal magic treasure revealing itself? Other unknown possibilities? How could the Ji clan, whose most powerful experts were only on the Zifu level, possibly withstand these things?

“Come, let’s take a look.” Ishwin said.

“Fine.” Ning was incomparably worried as well. At the same time, he immediately used his Ki to send his voice to Autumn Leaf, who was staying in a room not too far from his own. “Autumn Leaf, I’m heading out. You are in charge of Brightheart Island.”

Swoosh!

The two flew into the air at high speed, then running across the waves, quickly transformed into blurred rays of light which advanced to the north at high speed. At their level, when they put all their energy into their footwork techniques, they were actually rather faster than even the Azure Firebird, and many times faster than ordinary mounts.

Chapter 13: Immortal

A thousand kilometers south of the City of Ten Thousand Swords, the only commandery city of the Darcian Dynasty which was under control of the Ji clan. This place was a desolate mountain forest, completely ordinary and unremarkable! However, in the air above this desolate mountain forest, an enormous vortex had appeared! This was a rainbow vortex, thirty thousand meters high, its influence omnidirectional.

This enormous rainbow vortex was wildly pulling in the surrounding elemental energy. Because the collection of elemental energy was too vigorous, and the density of the collected energy was too high, the swirling pressure compacted it to the point where a rainbow of colors had appeared. This enormous elemental vortex...agitated the elemental aura in the surrounding area to surge outward in waves, causing those powerful ripples to broadcast in every direction!

This elemental vortex was shaped like a sharp awl, pointed directly downwards towards the ground. Clearly, the origin of this natural vortex was directly located within the ground region of that desolate mountain forest.

“Whooosh!”

A male figure appeared in the air, amidst the vibrating elemental energy. This man had long, loose hair, and wore black, traditional robes which had a strange beast embroidered onto them. He wore a crested crown on his head, and his face was as pale as jade. He naturally emanated a lofty aura, and his gaze was directed downwards, staring towards that origin point which the swirling, enormous elemental vortex was ‘pointing’ towards.

“Oh?” The black robed man nodded slightly. “This Anomaly...it should be that someone has reached the Void stage and become an Earth Immortal! I wonder if which side this new Earth Immortal belongs to...this is Swallow Mountain. The number of large tribes, schools, and sects located near Swallow Mountain can be counted on one hand. The closest one is the Heavenly Saint Sect! Can it be that one of the Primordial Daoists

of the Heavenly Saint Sect has made a breakthrough? But if it were one of the Primordial Daoists of the Heavenly Saint Sect, there should be protectors and guardians nearby.”

While pondering, he continued to stand there, watching quietly in mid-air.

The appearance of an Anomaly such as this meant that this person had already succeeded. It would be too late to stop it.

Rumble...

The enormous elemental vortex suddenly collapsed, causing the nearby elemental energy to violently tremble, but soon everything returned to normal. Right at the moment that the elemental vortex collapsed...a man appeared out of nowhere, garbed in fiery red robes and carrying three greatswords on his back. His two temples had hints of white hair, and he swept the area with a lightning-like gaze, soon noticing the black robed man who stood in the distance in mid-air.

“Congratulations, my fellow Daoist, for having returned to the Void and become an Earth Immortal!” The black robed man laughed.

“Might I ask who you are, fellow Daoist?” The man carrying the three greatswords on his back asked immediately. He didn’t dare to be discourteous either; he knew that the Anomaly generated by his breakthrough had lasted for only a short period of time. For someone to be able to sense it and also hurry over in such a short period of time...that was no ordinary feat.

The black robed man laughed. “I am Northpeak Skyfall! And you, fellow Daoist?”

The red robed man, hearing this, was shocked.

Northpeak?

Throughout the Stillwater Commandery, this surname was known to represent the most exalted force present; the Marquis of Stillwater! The Marquis of Stillwater was of the Northpeak clan! Ever since the time when the Darcian Dynasty unified the world and bequeathed marquisdoms, the

Northpeak clan and the Marquis of Stillwater had been in control of this region. Their roots were extremely deep, far more so than any of the other forces present in Stillwater Commandery. The only organization capable of competing for supremacy in this region was the Rain Dragon Guard, which represented the Darcian Dynasty itself!

A look of delight was on the red robed man's face as he said hurriedly, "So it is Immortal Laxiao! I was wondering who within the Stillwater Commandery could instantly notice this elemental Anomaly, and had guessed that only the Northpeak clan of Stillwater was capable of this! I didn't expect that the famous, world-renowned Immortal Skyfall had come in person. Compared to you, Immortal Skyfall, I'm just a junior. I imagine that you, Immortal Skyfall, have never even heard of my name. However, I did have a nickname in the past; Daoist Firedragon. Immortal Skyfall, have you heard of me?"

This Immortal Skyfall who stood before him was a Loose Immortal who had lived for tens of thousands of years. The longer Loose Immortals lived, the more terrifying they became. Although he was confident in being able to stay alive if Immortal Skyfall attacked, he knew that in terms of power, as a new Earth Immortal, he was probably a level weaker in strength.

"Daoist Firedragon?" Immortal Skyfall was briefly startled. He truly hadn't heard of this figure before. He immediately said, "I truly haven't heard of you. I imagine that prior to this, fellow Daoist, you weren't present in the Stillwater Commandery region."

"When I was a Wanxiang Adept, I went to the East Sea." The red robed man immediately said. "While adventuring in the East Sea, I suddenly broke through to the Primordial stage, and acquired the nickname of Daoist Firedragon. Because I was in the distant, remote East Sea...it isn't strange that you have never heard of me, Immortal Skyfall. A hundred years ago, I returned once more to this region. Perhaps because I felt very moved upon returning to my ancient homeland, I had a sudden feeling and thus immediately found a place to start training. I sealed myself into a training cave for a hundred years, and today, I just made my breakthrough.

Immortal Skyfall nodded. "So that's how it is. Daoist Firedragon, might I

ask where your homeland was?”

“I myself am from Stillwater Commandery.” Daoist Firedragon said. “Unfortunately, my clan was eliminated long ago. I won’t lie to you, Immortal Skyfall; the purpose of this return of mine was to seek out my clansmen and rebuild my clan, and also to avenge my clan and execute this blood feud.”

“Hahaha...” Immortal Skyfall laughed clearly. “So Daoist Firedragon, you are of my Stillwater Commandery? My Stillwater Commandery now has yet another Immortal. I truly am overjoyed! It is karmic which brings the two of us together, Daoist Firedragon. As for your matters, you can consider them to be the matters of the Marquis Palace of Stillwater. There’s no need for us to continue speaking here. Come, let’s go to Stillwater City. My clan’s Lord Marquis will definitely receive you, fellow Daoist, with the greatest of ceremony.”

“Then I’ll obey your request rather than standing on ceremony.” Daoist Firedragon laughed as well.

An Immortal was someone worthy of befriending.

Immortal Firedragon was in no rush to join a side right now. He had to see what sort of offers would be made to him, after all. He knew very well that in the end, this boundless world belonged to the Darcian Dynasty. If he wanted to rise and to make his clan grow and prosper, it was best if he either joined with the forces of the Darcian Dynasty, or if he joined with the forces of the various Marquises, who had deep roots in their respective areas.

“Let’s go.” Immortal Skyfall stretched his hand out, taking Immortal Firedragon’s.

Whoosh!

They disappeared from mid-air.

.....

The City of Ten Thousand Swords was the base and foundation of the Ji clan. Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow both lived within this city. What’s

more, that elemental Anomaly originated from just a thousand or so kilometers from the city; given their speed, the two of them naturally soon arrived at the desolate mountain forest.

“It should be right here.” Ninefire and Granny Shadow, along with an old servant, were currently standing atop a large magic calabash gourd. Ninefire was staring down at the desolate mountain forest. He said, “But why is it that it seems as though this mountain wilderness is very calm. There’s nothing special here.”

“I can’t see anything either.” Granny Shadow and the old servant were watching as well.

“Elder Brother.” Granny Shadow said in her hoarse voice. “I’ll go down and take a look. Ah Xing, you stay here as well.”

“Master, let me go.” The old servant let out a hoarse whisper, and then transformed into a ray of light, descending towards the desolate mountain forest below.

Granny Shadow was frantic. “Ah Xing!”

“Wait.” Ninefire looked at Granny Shadow. “This old servant of yours truly is devoted to you.”

The earlier, violent ripples of elemental energy clearly involved a major affair. The first person to investigate thus would be taking on great risk. Ninefire, as the Patriarch of the Ji clan, was the true pillar of the clan and thus couldn’t be risked. This was why Granny Shadow was about to go down, but the old servant went down first.

“In the entire world, Ah Xing is the most loyal person to me.” Granny Shadow said gently.

Moments later...

A blur from below rose into the skies, landing atop the flying gourd. It was that old servant with unbound hair and dressed in beast furs. Ninefire immediately asked, “How is it?”

“There is a large amount of elemental ore below.” The old servant said in

a low voice.

“A large amount of elemental ore?” Ninefire frowned. “How much?” Elemental ore contained gems which possessed elemental energy. However, the amount of elemental energy which people were able to absorb each day was limited, generally speaking. At a certain point in time, it would be impossible to absorb any more. Ordinary elemental gems were thus used to set up formations, or they might be useful in creating golems.

But training? They weren't very useful.

But of course, some rare natural treasures existed that didn't place much of a strain on the body, but which when ingested could provide power comparable to ten or even a hundred years of training. In addition, amongst elemental stones, there were high quality ones which had special effects. The elemental energy within high class elemental stones was very pure; when absorbing the energy within them, the body wasn't placed under much strain, and thus by using them, in a single day, one would be able to make gains comparable to ten days of normal training. However, the rate of consumption of stones for training in such a way was significant as well! It wasn't so bad if one only occasionally used a piece or two of high class elemental stones, but if an Immortal practitioner wanted to use them for long term training, one would have to buy thousands or more.

This wasn't something which the Ji clan was capable of affording.

“Very many. Very many.” The old servant said solemnly. “It should be an elemental ore mine. In addition, my superficial scan turned up high quality elemental stones already.”

“What? An elemental ore mine? With high class elemental stones?” Ninefire was instantly stunned.

An elemental ore mine?

Generally speaking, certain special environments would produce elemental ore mines. But of course, one was also capable of intentionally forming an elemental ore mine. For the sake of making his breakthrough, Immortal Firedragon had to have enough elemental energy present for

him to use. Thus, he was willing to pay a high price to set up a grand formation which drew in the surrounding elemental energy. Day after day, month after month, an elemental ore mine was formed.

“Elemental ore mine?” Granny Shadow revealed a look of excitement as well. “Our Ji clan is about to suddenly rise to prominence?!”

“Let’s go take a look first.” Ninefire suppressed his excitement. He immediately collected his magic gourd, and the three of them descended at high speed into the desolate mountain forest, diving into the ground to investigate.

Chapter 14: A Large Scale Mine

The sky slowly grew brighter. Ji Ning and his father, Ji Ishwin, were currently moving at top speed, moving towards the origin of those elemental ripples.

“Eh? I have never competed against Father in speed before. Father is actually this fast?” Ning was extremely surprised. His divine body was comparable to that of early-stage Zifu-level Fiendgod practitioners. Given that he also had the Windwing Evasion technique, one could imagine how fast he was. Even when he didn’t use his wing-type magic treasure, he was still very fast...but his father, Ji Ishwin, was able to move at the same pace as him.

“Father, your footwork technique...? Can it be that you have established your Violet Palace?” Ning use his Ki to ask mentally while hurrying forward. He didn’t realize that when the disaster had occurred, aside from the injuries suffered by the Yuchi siblings, his own father, Ishwin, had been heavily wounded as well.

“No need to ask.” Ishwin clearly didn’t want to discuss it. “This speed is already my maximum.”

“Understood.” Ning nodded.

If he were to use his wing-type magic treasures, he would still be able to increase his speed by quite a bit, but there was no need.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two moved forward like blurs of smoke. Moving at such an astonishing speed, this distance of thousands of kilometers was traversed in just a single hour! Their speed was completely at that of the Zifu Disciple level.

“It should be in this region.” Ning came to a halt, standing atop the crown of a large, ancient tree. He stared towards a mountain forest. “The ripple originated from no more than three hundred kilometers away.”

“Should be.” Ishwin nodded as well.

“Let’s take a close look.” The two looked about carefully as they ran forward atop the trees. Soon, Ishwin jumped directly down into the ground, emerging shortly afterwards. “Ning, come over here.” Ning immediately leapt down, moving like a ray of light to the grassy area where Ishwin was currently standing.

Ning hurriedly asked, “What is it?”

“There are elemental stones underground.” Ishwin said solemnly. “And this should be an extremely rich elemental ore mine. I’ve even noticed high quality elemental stones.”

“High quality elemental stones?” Ning was shocked as well. “The area under the control of my Ji clan actually has high quality elemental stones?”

“This vein of elemental stones is extremely rich, and there are very few other ores mixed in. Still, because these are elemental stones...there’s no way to traverse through them using ground-tunneling arts.” Ishwin said. “Just by using ground-tunneling arts, I was only able to burrow to a depth of a hundred and fifty meters, which is where the elemental ore mine begins. Further down...is an extremely rich vein of elemental ore.”

Ning nodded. Ground-tunneling techniques allowed one to pass through ordinary dirt and rocks, but some special materials were completely impassable. Elemental stones, for example, were impassable.

“Swish!”

From afar, a hundred kilometers away, a golden light suddenly rose into the skies, emitting an ear-piercing sound.

Ning and Ishwin both turned to look.

“The golden arrow of the Ji clan!” Ning and Ishwin, upon seeing it, immediately used their movement techniques to hurry forward. They traversed a kilometer with every single movement. This golden arrow of the Ji clan was used as a summons, calling all of the men of the Ji clan in the surrounding area who saw it to hurry forward to its location.

.....

Ning and Ishwin saw from far away that more than ten people were present, amongst them the gray-robed Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow. The others belonged to the Central Prefecture of the Ji clan; after all, this place was closest to the Central Prefecture City, the City of Ten Thousand Swords. These people turned to look and recognized this father-son duo.

“Ishwin, the two of you, father and son, really are fast.” Ninefire said.

“We hurried over from the City of Ten Thousand Swords, but we just arrived. You two, father and son, are located at the border regions of West Prefecture City, but you arrived as well.”

“Formidable.”

These Xiantian experts all said in praise.

“You came quite quickly.” A laugh rang out. A ray of light descended at high speed, then walked over. It was a middle-aged man dressed in beast furs.

“Truekeep, you came as well.” Ninefire smiled and nodded.

Ning saw this middle-aged figure come over. This man was named ‘Ji Truekeep’, and he was the number one figure of the Ji clan of the Northern Prefecture, on par with Ning’s father. For him to be able to hurry over from North Prefecture City so quickly...it seemed that Ji Truekeep should be a Zifu Disciple as well.

“On the surface, my Ji clan only has Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow, two Zifu Disciples.” Ning said to himself. “However, a clan must have heirs and members amongst the younger generation who have reached the Zifu Disciple level. Now, it seems as though this Ji Truekeep truly is a Zifu Disciple. My father, given the earlier movement abilities he displayed, should also be a Zifu Disciple!”

Ishwin and Truekeep glanced at each other, nodding.

Ishwin spoke out, “Patriarch, why have you summoned us?”

“I imagine that you have discovered as well,” Ninefire said solemnly, “That underground, there is an elemental ore mine. A very rich vein of

elemental ore.”

“Right.” All of the clansmen nodded, their eyes filled with excitement.

Based on the rules of the Darcian Dynasty, the land within ten thousand kilometers of a commandery city belonged to the master of that commandery city! As for any territories under dispute outside of that area, the ownership of those regions depended on who had the strongest fist. This elemental ore mine was extremely close to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. According to the rules set by the Darcian Dynasty...without question, it belonged to the Ji clan!

“Not only is this vein very rich, it is also very large.” Ninefire looked towards the surrounding area. “We will now carry out a detailed analysis and mapping of this elemental ore mine. I will fly towards the southeast. Truekeep, you fly towards the north. Shadow, you fly towards the southwest. As for everyone else, carefully investigate how deep this mine is and the quality of the ore within it. No matter what the results are, within four hours, we’ll regroup here.”

“Yes.” All of them assented.

Soon, three rays of light flew towards three different directions, while Ning, Ishwin, and the others burrowed into the ground. Because there was no way to use ground-tunneling arts through elemental ore, the only option they had to was to slowly dig through.

“Let’s go.” Ning’s body became surrounded by the petals of his Fire-Water Lotus, which slowly swiveled about him, easily digging into the ground below.

This allowed Ning to easily move deeper into the ground, step by step.

As soon as he went downwards, the earth and mud above him collapsed.

But Ning just ignored it, continuing to move downwards...and he soon ran into the surface layer of the elemental ore mine. Large amounts of elemental ore were connected to each other like ugly rocks. These were all low-quality elemental stones, and just by looking at them, one wouldn’t be able to see much of a difference between them and ordinary rocks. The

only difference was that they emanated quite a bit of an elemental aura.

Crackle...

The Fire-Water Lotus easily dug downwards, and Ning continued to move down at an astonishing rate.

“So deep.” Ning could sense that he had already tunneled downwards for a hundred kilometers, but he was still surrounded by a large amount of elemental stones. “The hundred kilometers above me is filled with elemental stones. How deep is this elemental ore mine? And the top of the elemental ore mine was only a few dozen meters from the surface of the ground. How is it that nobody has discovered this mine, in all this time?”

What Ning didn't understand was that before Immortal Firedragon had set up a grand formation, who could have possibly found it?

“Swoosh.” He finally encountered ordinary mud yet again.

“Three hundred kilometers deep.” Ning was stunned. “Ore mines are generally spread out horizontally. If even the vertical depth is so great, how wide must the mine be?”

Swoosh!

Following this, Ning immediately began moving upwards at high speed.

A long time later...

He finally emerged once more, appearing on the surface of the ground. He quickly returned to the gathering spot, where Ninefire, Granny Shadow, the old servant, and Truekeep were already present.

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire looked towards Ning, his eyes lighting up. “You’ve already completed your investigations?”

“Right.” Ning nodded. He glanced around. Traveling three hundred kilometers into the ground was far more difficult than flying thousands of kilometers in the air. Fortunately, he had been able to rely on his Fire-Water Lotus, which borrowed the elemental power of the world, to move so easily. The others had to exhaust their Ki in order to slowly dig.

“How deep is it?” Ninefire and the others all looked towards Ning.

“Three hundred kilometers.” Ning said.

The faces of Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Truekeep changed. They couldn't be bothered to feel amazed at how Ning had, in a single short hour, made a round trip underground of more than three hundred kilometers. This was because they were already beginning to grow panicked.

“What's wrong?” Ning hurriedly asked.

“This elemental ore mine...” Ninefire said solemnly. “We've finished our investigations as well. It has a circumference of at least four thousand kilometers! If it has a depth of three hundred kilometers...then this truly is an enormous large-scale elemental ore mine. To our Ji clan, such an enormous elemental ore mine isn't a blessing; it is a calamity!”

A grand calamity!

Ning instantly understood. A stomach of a certain size could only hold a certain amount of food; if you filled it with too much, you could die from overstuffing.

“This is a rich vein, and an enormous one.” Ninefire said solemnly. “Once we begin to excavate it, the value of the ore within will definitely be countless times greater than the total assets of the Ji clan. Tell me, how can our Ji clan handle it?”

This mine...

This mine had been formed after the peak Primal Daoist, ‘Daoist Firedragon’, had paid an enormous price in order to set up a large formation to collect elemental energy, so as to help himself break through. This mine had been forming for one hundred years. If it was completely mined out, the value of it would be comparable to half the assets of an ordinary Primal Daoist. Because Daoist Firedragon had broken through to the Earth Immortal level, his horizons had been expanded and he no longer cared as much. In addition, mining the elemental ore would simply be too difficult; even a Primal Daoist probably would be too lazy to go through the mining. Only, the likes of Wanxiang Adepts would go wild with excitement for something like this.

“Then what should we do?” Granny Shadow immediately asked.

“I’m not afraid of others. I’m only afraid of Snowdragon Mountain!” Ninefire’s face was filled with worry. “The Snowdragon Mountain of the Swallow Mountain area is just a branch clan. Behind it...is the true Snowdragon Mountain Sect! A major sect which has Primal Daoists standing guard over it. And, based on my calculations and the passage of time, the Zifu Disciples of the branch sect of Snowdragon Mountain should have already arrived in the nearby area!”

Chapter 15: Snowdragon Mountain

Everything happened just as Ji Ninefire predicted. A thousand kilometers away from them...

There was a screen hovering in mid-air, and atop that screen, there were four figures, staring down below. Suddenly, a ray of light rose into the skies. It was a large, armored, muscular man who was standing atop a greatsword. This muscular man had a hint of a blue light glowing from his skin, and standing there in midair atop that greatsword, he looked like a Fiendgod.

“My fellow disciples.” The muscular man had a look of delight on his face. “I’ve finished my investigations. There is a large amount of elemental ore underground, with high quality elemental stones within the deposit. This is a very rich vein of elemental ore.”

“Oh?” A long-haired man who wore a black robe and had eight bloody trigrams in front and behind him nodded, then laughed. “Junior apprentice-brother Ju San, thank you for your hard work. Who would have expected that an elemental ore mine such as this would have been hidden within the territory of the Ji clan? Right. Junior apprentice-brother Ju San, have you found any traces of mining?”

The muscular man shook his head.

The black robed man nodded in satisfaction. “The Ji clan has never sold elemental stones to outsiders. It seems that prior to this, they hadn’t discovered this vein either. My fellow disciples, I’d like to trouble you to go in each direction and investigate carefully exactly how large this vein is, while I will investigate how deep it is. After finishing our investigations, we’ll gather here again.”

“Yes, elder apprentice-brother Ziqi.” Three men and women, including the muscular man, acknowledged, then each flew away on their own flying-type magic treasures, transforming into rays of light that flew towards four different directions to investigate.

The black robed man collected his flying screen while rushing towards

the ground, smashing through it and burrowing deep.

.....

A long time later.

The three men and one woman who had left earlier had already returned, flying on their magic treasures.

“Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi still hasn’t finished exploring?” A green-haired man said in surprise. “It seems this mine really is quite deep.”

“Based on just what we’ve learned, this elemental ore mine has to have a circumference of four thousand kilometers.” A nearby woman whose hair was also emanating a green light said solemnly. “If it’s deep as well...then this mine is going to be an astonishing one.”

Right after she finished speaking.

Swoosh!

From below, a ray of light surged towards the heavens, then came to a halt. It was their black-robed elder apprentice-brother, Ziqi.

“Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi.” The three men and woman bowed respectfully. Actually, all five of them were Zifu Disciples and of the same generation. Logically speaking, there was no need for them to act like this. But this Ziqi’s power was definitely far above theirs.

“What an elemental ore mine. It is at least three hundred kilometers deep.” The black-robed man sighed in surprise.

“Three hundred kilometers?”

“That deep?”

“The four of us have found that this mine has a circumference of four thousand kilometers. For it to also have such an astonishing depth...this elemental ore mine is simply too...” The three men and one woman were all in a state of shock. Some mines were fairly shallow, and it made sense for a mine of a circumference of thousands of kilometers to just a few kilometers deep. But this one was three hundred kilometers deep!

The black-robed man shouted, "This elemental ore mine belongs to Snowdragon Mountain!"

"Right, it belongs to our Snowdragon Mountain!"

"We've rendered a major merit. The main sect will definitely reward us heavily."

"Our chance has come!"

The five of them were all incomparably excited. They were easily able to tell the general size and scale of this elemental ore mine and knew the value of it. The value was inconceivably high! Most likely, even those Primal Daoists that stood at the very pinnacle of power in Snowdragon Mountain would care deeply about this place.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi." The green-haired woman frowned. "This place is very close to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. According to the laws of the Darcian Dynasty, this place should be considered as belonging to the Ji clan."

"What the hell is the Ji clan?" Ziqi snorted coldly. "Dare they intervene in Snowdragon Mountain's mine?"

The nearby green-haired man nodded. "No need to worry about the Ji clan. Snowdragon Mountain is definitely taking over this elemental ore mine! But no matter what, we can't be too incautious. According to the laws of the Darcian Dynasty, this place is the territory of the City of Ten Thousand Swords, which means this mine belongs to the Ji clan. Our Snowdragon Mountain cannot openly violate the laws of the Darcian Dynasty!"

"Right." Dong Ziqi nodded lightly.

True.

Even if they had to skirt the laws, they definitely couldn't openly challenge the Darcian Dynasty! Even the Marquis Palace of Stillwater Commandery, which was almost as ancient as the Darcian Dynasty itself, wouldn't dare to challenge the Darcian Dynasty!

“Right now, I’m only afraid of one thing.” The green-haired man frowned. “If the Ji clan were to send someone to ally with the army of the Darcian Dynasty and sign a contract giving this site up to the Darcian Dynasty...! If they were to directly sign over this mine to the Darcian Dynasty, then there would be nothing that we can do!”

“Apprentice-brother Hefang speaks reason.” A cold-faced, gray-robed man nodded. “We have to be careful.”

“We do have to be careful.” The muscular man said frantically, “The Ji clan definitely will realize that they aren’t strong enough to hold this mine. If they give up the mine to the Darcian Dynasty, then the Ji clan will at least gain thirty percent of it! This would also result in them having the Darcian Dynasty supporting them. We wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

“Sign an agreement?”

Dong Ziqi’s eyes were dark and gloomy. “It’s not that easy to do!”

The other four looked towards Dong Ziqi.

“The garrison of the Darcian Dynasty in the Swallow Mountain region are in Swallow Mountain City.” Dong Ziqi said. “The general of that garrison is a good friend of mine.”

“But elder apprentice-brother Ziqi, as soon as the Ji clan makes a report and offers to transfer the mine...a mere general wouldn’t dare to suppress the news. If he forcibly suppresses the report of something as major as this, and is later discovered to have done so, then the general will definitely have his soul shattered and dispersed in punishment.” The green-haired man said, concerned.

Ziqi said, “I know that. He won’t dare to forcibly suppress the news, but at least he’ll be able to delay it!”

“Oh?” The other four looked at Ziqi as well.

“You should know.” Dong Ziqi said. “The first part to signing an agreement of relinquishing a mine is the report to the higher ups! Afterwards, the higher ups will immediately send people to investigate the Ji clan’s territory. Only after they have verified that there is indeed such a

mine within the Ji clan's territory will they sign the contract."

The other four nodded.

This was indeed the case.

Once the report was made, someone would immediately be sent over. The efficiency would be very high.

"As soon as the report is made, we won't be able to act as we please." Ziqi said, "What we can do is to have the garrison general at Swallow Mountain City delay as much as he can...and in addition, it will take time for the person sent by the Darcian Dynasty to make his way over. This will be enough time for us to seize the City of Ten Thousand Swords!"

"Seize the City of Ten Thousand Swords?" The other four nodded gently.

"As long as we take over the City of Ten Thousand Swords and acquire the official writ, then we will be the masters of the City of Ten Thousand Swords. In accordance with the laws of the Darcian Dynasty, the mine will belong to us. Even if the Darcian Dynasty sends someone over...because the official writ has a new owner, there will be no way for the Ji clan to sign a contract." Ziqi said.

"Fine. We'll take over the official writ!"

"Once the official writ is in our hands, we will be the masters of the mine." Cold light flashed in each of their eyes.

Ziqi said in a low voice, "If the Ji clan dares to resist, then annihilate them!"

"Right." The other four nodded, not worried about the Ji clan at all.

"Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi, before this, when we were investigating the size of the mine, we discovered that the Ji clan's forces were within a thousand kilometers." The green-haired woman said.

"Let's go." Ziqi said as he let out a cold snort. "Let's go visit the Ji clan."

.....

Right at this moment, in the air above the elemental ore mine, quite a

few Zifu Disciples were conducting investigations, including the Ironwood clan, the Riverbank clan, the Bandit clan, the Blackfire Cult...they were all local forces of Swallow Mountain. Only the forces of the Darcian Dynasty, stationed in Swallow Mountain City, were not present.

“What a rich vein.”

“Such an elemental ore mine...just looking at it is frightening.”

.....

The desolate mountain forests. The Ji clan’s forces were gathered there, deciding what to do.

“Ji Ninefire!”

Suddenly, a gloomy voice rang out. This voice caused the faces of quite a few clansmen of the Ji clan to change. Ning’s soul, being so powerful, wasn’t impacted much. He raised his head to look. He saw that high above them in mid-air, an enormous screen was descending towards them at high speed. Standing atop the screen were five men and women, all of them with extraordinary auras.

The leader of the group was emanating a deathly cold aura. He was dressed in black, and the front and back of his robe were covered with eight bloody trigrams.

“Dong Ziqi!” Ninefire’s face changed slightly.

Ning looked carefully at the five on the screen, paying special attention to their leader, Dong Ziqi. “He is Dong Ziqi, of the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain?”

Dong Ziqi’s fame was widespread, and he was quietly acknowledged to be the number one expert of the six hegemonies of the Swallow Mountain region!

Chapter 16: Crossing Swords

Ji Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others had long ago come to view Ji Ning as the future pillar of the Ji clan! They naturally had long ago allowed Ning to view the intelligence reports the clan had regarding the various ancient monsters and Zifu Disciples of the various forces spread throughout Swallow Mountain. Ning knew very well...that this Dong Ziqi was a peak Zifu Disciple, one who had come from the main sect, whose abilities were far more powerful than those available to the local tribes of the Swallow Mountain Region. Dong Ziqi's most powerful ability was the 'Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation'!

This was different from other great formations, which generally needed to be set up in advance. This 'Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation' was rather similar to the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]; one could activate it with a thought. Perhaps it wasn't as high level and as formidable as the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], but this was a peak Zifu Disciple. When such a man used this formation, he probably would be able to fight a new Wanxiang Adept to a standstill. This wasn't something which could be compared the likes of Bei Zishan, who had to rely on the Myriad Wraiths Banner.

"It's quite rare for us to be able to see you, fellow Daoist Dong." Ninefire's attitude was very humble. "Fellow Daoist Dong, might I ask why you have come?"

"Ji Ninefire."

The five Zifu Disciples atop the banner landed on the ground. They swept the Ji clansmen with their gaze. Their eyes were filled with lofty arrogance; clearly, they held the Ji clan in no regard. This caused Ning and the others to feel a hint of rage in their hearts, but they understood...they had to suppress it.

"The land which your Ji clan controls really is a blessed area. It actually has an elemental ore mine." Ziqi's cold, sinister eyes stared at Ninefire. "If it wasn't for the elemental energy vibrations which emanated from here

two days ago, we wouldn't have had any idea. Hmph. I imagine that your Ji clan has secretly mined out quite a few elemental stones. You really are quite bold."

Looks of anger couldn't help but appear in the eyes of the Ji clansmen, but Ninefire used his Ki to bark at them mentally, "All of you, endure it!"

"My Ji clan just discovered it as well." Ninefire maintained a smiling face towards Ziqi.

"Just discovered it?" Ziqi swept the Ji clansmen with his gaze. "Have you investigated the size and scale of this elemental mine?"

"Not yet." Ninefire shook his head. "All we know is that this is a rich vein of elemental ore."

Ziqi said in a cold voice, "Since you don't know, then I'll tell you. Not only is this a rich vein, it stretches to a circumference of four thousand kilometers, and is three hundred kilometers deep as well! Your tiny little Ji clan is completely unable to try and swallow such an enormous elemental ore mine; if you tried, it would choke you to death!"

"That's fine." Ninefire laughed. "In the end, my Ji clan can just offer this elemental ore mine to the Darcian Dynasty. By then, our Ji clan will obtain 30% of it, while the Darcian Dynasty will obtain 70%. In addition, our Ji clan will also receive the protection of the Darcian Dynasty, at which point we won't fear anyone."

Ziqi's pupils contracted.

These locals!

Although they didn't come from any sects, and thus remained Zifu Disciples despite having trained for nearly four centuries, after having lived so long, these people had become incomparably crafty. Just now, he had been so arrogant, but Ninefire had remained all smiles. However, at the critical point in their negotiations, Ninefire had directly given voice to what Snowdragon Mountain feared the most.

"Listen up!" Dong Ziqi's voice was incomparably cold. "This elemental ore mine is being taken over by Snowdragon Mountain! Don't threaten

me. If you threaten me...the only result will be the destruction of the Ji clan!"

Ninefire's face changed.

The others, such as Granny Shadow, were all both angry and agitated when they heard this. Ning felt a smoldering rage burn in his heart as well. Clearly, according to the laws of the Darcian Dynasty, this elemental ore mine belonged to the Ji clan! But Snowdragon Mountain's people wanted to just take it from them, and in such a domineering manner?

"Fellow Daoist Dong." Ninefire suppressed his rage.

Just now, he had just decided to bring out the strongest 'threat' he could must...so as to cause the opponents to feel nervous, and then engage in negotiations. He didn't expect that these people didn't want to negotiate at all; they acted with completely tyranny, wanting to take advantage of the Ji clan in their weakness!

"This is Swallow Mountain." Ninefire said solemnly. "The main Snowdragon Mountain Sect is millions of kilometers away, but once my Ji clan makes the report, in just a few days, the Angels of the Darcian Dynasty will arrive. By then, we will just directly sign a transfer agreement. Actually, our Ji clan doesn't have that much ambition; the only thing we desire is to survive!"

"Survive?" Ziqi laughed coldly. "At least you know your own limits!"

Ninefire said, "Snowdragon Mountain can arrange for people to mine this quarry. Our Ji clan definitely will not disturb you during the mining process. After you have completed your mining...all we ask is that you remove all of your forces from the Ji clan's territory. As for the ore in this elemental ore mine, my Ji clan will not ask for a single stone of it! My Ji clan is willing to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law with your Snowdragon Mountain!"

Oath of Heavenly Law...

This was useless for ordinary mortals, but no one who had stepped onto the path of Immortal cultivation would dare to violate an Oath of

Heavenly Law.

“Oh?” Ziqi hesitated.

“Elder apprentice-brother Ziqi.” The nearby muscular man sent mentally through his Ki. “These conditions aren’t bad. We don’t care about the territory the Ji clan controls anyhow. What really matters is that elemental ore mine. Since the Ji clan is willing to allow us to harvest all of the ore within the elemental ore mine...if they are willing to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law, then they won’t dare violate it.”

“Idiot.” The green-haired woman to the side sent mentally as well. “This is just a delaying tactic of the Ji clan! The Ji clan is going to set up an Oath of Heavenly Law with ‘us’, but not with those of us here. Even if we fellow disciples swear to an Oath of Heavenly Law, the high level members of the main sect can still decide to just cast us aside and exterminate the Ji clan. They definitely want us to have a high-level member of the main sect to come here and swear the oath. But we would first need to send word back, and by the time the high-level member of the main sect comes...more than enough time will have passed for the Ji clan and the Darcian Dynasty to have signed an agreement.”

“Younger apprentice-sister, your words have merit.” The gray-robed man sent mentally as well.

Dong Ziqi nodded slightly.

The Ji clansmen were still awaiting their response.

“Your Ji clan wishes to swear an Oath of Heavenly Law with Snowdragon Mountain...might I ask, which member of Snowdragon Mountain do you wish to come swear the oath with you?” Ziqi looked at Ninefire.

Ninefire laughed. “Any Wanxiang Adept is acceptable. The fate of our Ji clan rests on this agreement; naturally, we must be cautious. The weight of an oath of a Zifu Disciple of Snowdragon Mountain isn’t quite enough... and we don’t dare trust fully in it either. I imagine that you, fellow Daoist Dong, also understand that the oath of a Zifu Disciple doesn’t have much binding power over the main Snowdragon Mountain Sect.”

Dong Ziqi narrowed his eyes.

A single Zifu Disciple? The main sect could sacrifice one with but a word.

But a Wanxiang Adept was different. The main sect only had a limited number of them, and when they swore an oath, it represented the main sect swearing an oath! If the main sect dared to sacrifice even a Wanxiang Adept, wouldn't it cause the other Wanxiang Adepts and Zifu Disciples to have an icy feeling in their hearts? To cause the Wanxiang Adepts of the clan to all have lessened loyalty, for the sake of an elemental ore mine, wasn't worth it. Thus, it was most appropriate for a Wanxiang Adept to come and swear the oath.

"Ji Ninefire!" Ziqi said in a freezing voice. "You want a Wanxiang Adept to come and swear an Oath of Heavenly Law with you? They are high level members of my main sect, which is over a million kilometers away! After we send the message, it will take at least ten days or half a month for a Wanxiang Adept to come! Within ten day's time, your Ji clan would most likely have secretly signed an agreement with the Darcian Dynasty long ago!"

"Then..." Ninefire hesitated.

"As I see it, you had best hand over the official writ!" Ziqi shouted. "Hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords to us! Snowdragon Mountain will continue to permit you to live within the City of Ten Thousand Swords, and everything will remain unchanged for the Ji clan...after we have completely excavated the elemental ore mine, we will return the official writ to you!"

Ninefire was frantic. "How can that be acceptable?"

"No way." Granny Shadow said angrily as well. "The official writ is the very foundation of the Ji clan."

Ning just watched.

These people of Snowdragon Mountain...you gave them an inch, and they attempted to take a mile! They made it sound so nice and simple; they

would return the official writ after finishing the excavation? What if they didn't? In addition, the Ji clan had already made a huge concession in being willing to offer the entire mine to Snowdragon Mountain. How could it be that Snowdragon Mountain now desired to take away the official writ as well, and 'give it back' in the future?

"Hmph." Ning's face was ugly to behold, and the same was true for the other members of the Ji clan.

"Do you think that our Snowdragon Mountain clan will lie to a petty little clan like the Ji clan?" Ziqi shouted.

"It seems as though Snowdragon Mountain has taken advantage of quite a few clans." Ninefire was enraged as well. "Otherwise, why would a branch of Snowdragon Mountain have come to Swallow Mountain!"

Ziqi's face changed.

Outrageous!

Ninefire actually had become harder and more forceful! Zifi swept the Ji clansmen with his gaze, noticing that youngest, solitary figure, the fur-clad youth. He immediately sent through his Ki, "Junior apprentice-brother Muse, the Ji clan only has a few Zifu Disciples. The one with the most potential is this Ji Ning; he is the one who, according to the stories, killed Zishan."

"Ji Ning." The gray-robed man noticed the fur-clad youth in front of them as well.

That battle he had with Bei Zishan that year...

Ning's reputation had been spread throughout the various forces of Swallow Mountain long ago. After all, at that time, quite a few Xiantian lifeforms of the various clans had all been sent back to their own clans, causing them to become aware of how terrifying Ji Ning was, and that Ji Ning should be a Zifu Disciple! A Zifu Disciple at age eleven or twelve... how terrifying would he be in the future? The various powers had taken notice of Ning long ago, and the intelligence reports regarding Ning were thus incomparably detailed.

Everything which had happened to him since he was young, as well as his appearance and his habits...they had all been collected and compiled.

Dong Ziqi didn't care about anyone else in the entire Ji clan; the only one he cared about was this Ji Ning! He didn't fear the current Ji Ning; what he feared was the future Ji Ning! Given Ji Ning's talent...in the future, it probably wouldn't be too hard for him to become a Wanxiang Adept.

"Junior apprentice-brother Muse, the member of the Ji clan with the most potential and who poses the greatest threat is this Ji Ning. The entire Ji clan treats him as their treasure." Ziqi sent mentally. "He is still fairly young, however, and at present, he shouldn't be too powerful. Zishan, that fool...aside from being able to forge that Myriad Wraiths Banner, which was fairly powerful, his own level of ability wasn't that great. In addition, the results of that battle probably had something to do with that Wanxiang Adept. Ji Ning's own level of power is most likely not that great."

"Junior apprentice-brother, make a sudden attack and capture Ji Ning! By then, with Ji Ning in our hands, do you think the Ji clan will dare to disobey the orders of our Snowdragon Mountain?" Ziqi sent mentally. "Even in the extremely unlikely circumstance that they don't care about Ji Ning's life, we will then simply kill Ji Ning. Without him, the Ji clan won't pose a threat to us at all in the future."

"Right." The gray-robed man nodded.

Ning was indeed a threat to them. Nobody feared Ning right now, but they feared the future Ning.

"Junior apprentice-brother, if you suddenly use your magic technique to attack, even I will have some trouble fending it off. You shouldn't have any problems in subduing Ji Ning." Ziqi sent mentally. Although his power was greater than that of Muse's, he had to first activate his Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. By the time he did so, the Ji clan would probably be at maximum vigilance.

Thus, they had to make a sudden attack, and succeed in an instant! For this, Muse was the best choice.

“Leave it to me. I made a breakthrough in this technique of mine not long ago.” Muse sent back mentally with great confidence.

“Then we’ll just wait for you. Once you take down Ji Ning...we will have the upper hand.” Ziqi said.

Chapter 17: Longing! Rain Line!

At a single glance, Dong Ziqi saw clearly the Ji clan's weakness. His thoughts were completely correct; Ji Ning was indeed the future pillar of the Ji clan! In this group of Ji clan experts...even if Ji Ninefire and Granny Shadow had to die, they wouldn't let Ning die!

"Ninefire, I urge you to obediently hand over the official writ." Ziqi frowned as he shouted.

"My Ji clan is indeed weak and small, which is why we are willing to offer this elemental ore mine to you without requesting any part of it. But for you to try and forcibly take over our official writ...you are perhaps going too far! The official writ is the foundation of the Ji clan. How can my Ji clan..." Ninefire's face changed halfway through his words, and he couldn't help but lower his head to look at the ground.

The ground was trembling slightly.

Dong Ziqi's group of five stood in the distance, and in their midst, the gray-robed man's eyes flashed. The Ki in his body had long ago entered the ground. By the time the Ji clan's Zifu Disciples sensed it, the technique had already been executed!

"BOOM!"

Strands of green, wooden vines emerged suddenly from the ground, all of them flailing about wildly, covered with a layer of deep green light. The thin, slender strands of vines twined about each other like a tough cord rope. They suddenly emerged from the ground beneath Ning's feet, instantly wrapping themselves around Ning!

Fast!

Completely caught off-guard!

"What!" The faces of Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others changed. In the blink of an eye, Ji Ning, who had been standing next to them just moments ago, had been wildly entangled by those countless rattan vines.

"Quick, save Ji Ning!" Granny Shadow shouted.

“Too late!” Dong Ziqi, standing in the distance, just laughed loudly as he spoke.

Bang!

The countless vines wrapped around Ning whipped out violently, throwing him towards the ground. With a rumble, an enormous crevice appeared within the ground, with Ning and those vines already burrowed deep within the ground.

“Snowdragon Mountain, you actually...” Ninefire’s face was savage.

“Release my son.” Ji Ishwin was frantic as well.

Every member of the Ji clan wanted to save Ning, but the sudden emergence of those vines, which had wrapped around Ning and then thrown him underground, caused them to not know what they should do to save him.

“Hahaha...” Dong Ziqi just laughed wildly as he turned to look at the gray-robed man. “Junior apprentice-brother Muse, bring Ji Ning over here...” Dong Ziqi’s face suddenly changed, because he saw that his fellow disciple’s forehead was matted with sweat. Clearly, he was already going all out in this struggle.

“That Ji Ning is currently breaking through my technique...” The gray-robed man’s eyes had turned red, and he was pouring all of his Ki into the technique.

.....

Underground.

A seed had grown into thousands of wooden green tendrils, which were now heavily entangling themselves around Ning. Within the entangling clutches of the vines, a Fire-Water Lotus was surrounding Ning, constantly swiveling around him and frantically resisting these tendrils, unceasingly killing them one by one while the dead vines were unceasingly being reborn.

“Immortal practitioners truly have many techniques at their disposal.

This technique wasn't included in our intelligence reports. I wonder which branch member of Snowdragon Mountain used it." Ning had suddenly suffered an attack, and this attack was too fast, giving him no time to break through before he had been thrown underground.

Due to the constriction of the tendrils, the amount of space Ning had to move in was too limited, giving him no chance to use the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] at all.

Thus, the first thing Ning had done was to execute the Fire-Water Lotus.

"Swivel, swivel..." The Fire-Water Lotus slowly swiveled, grinding those thin vines that wanted to entangle Ning into dust. Nearly five years had passed since that battle with Bei Zishan, and during these five years, Ning's improvements with regards to his understanding of the Dao had only grown greater and greater.

If early on, the insight he had gained with regards to the Dao was just a thread, over the course of time, he had gained more threads of the True Meaning of the Dao.

These many thin threads...had drawn close to each other, naturally resulting in a thicker thread.

Ning's time spent at Serpentwing Lake in particular, where he was virtually always in tune with the world...had resulted in him reaching a very high level of understanding. Actually, this was something which could only be accomplished by an Immortal practitioner who had reached a very high level of understanding. When one could always be in tune with nature and always be able to go attune with the Dao, it was only natural that one would gain many insights into the True Meaning of the Dao.

His level of understanding had risen.

Thus, the power his Fire-Water Lotus now had was naturally much greater than before. That murderous grinding power alone would most likely instantly grind even peak Xiantian experts into tiny pieces in but an instant.

"Darknorth Sword." Within the Fire-Water Lotus, Ning drew forth a

Darknorth Sword.

“Longing! Rain Line!”

Ning murmured softly to himself.

Each time he used this technique, he couldn't help but think of his mother. This technique was one which he had developed thanks to the boundless longing he felt for his mother! It was the longing each drop of rain held for each other drop which allowed them to form a line of rain... the insights Ning had gained over the past five years into the Dao had resulted in him developing many techniques, but this was the most powerful of them all.

This technique contained within it a boundless, powerful longing. It was born from the [Raindrop Sutra], but it had left the Raindrop Sutra far behind.

“Swish....”

Ning simultaneously struck out with two Darknorth Swords at the same time, piercing past the Fire-Water Lotus, which seemed to be like a shadow, not obstructing Ning's swords in the slightest. Ning's swords seemed to be like the caress of a mother, carrying boundless longing within them...as they summoned a large amount of natural power which directly coalesced atop the two swords.

Anyone seeing this technique would unconsciously feel a sour feeling in their hearts, sense a powerful, endless yearning.

“Crackle...” Many vines were instantly shattered. Although they were very tough, they were still chopped apart. In the face of Ning's most powerful close-combat sword technique, the technique of Zifu Disciple Muse was unable to contain Ning.

Actually, the first reason for this was that Ning's swordplay had already far outstripped that of most Zifu Disciples. Most likely, even many Wanxiang Adepts wouldn't be on par with him in this regard.

The second reason was that Ning's Fiendgod body was simply too powerful, comparable to an early-stage Fiendgod Zifu Disciple. His

strength was so mighty, and his swordplay was so formidable; how hard must it be for a technique to contain him!

Sword light flashed and danced, shattering a large number of frantically twisting vines. Ning followed his sword light and rose into the sky, breaking through the earth and arriving on the surface of the ground.

.....

“Bang!”

Just as the Ji clansmen were worriedly looking at the ground, into the hole from whence the rattan vines had disappeared, suddenly, hundreds of meters away, the ground suddenly exploded as a ray of sword light soared into the sky. A fur-clad youth, wielding a pair of swords, his body surrounded by a Fire-water Lotus, suddenly drifted up, then landed on the ground.

“How is that possible!” Dong Ziqi’s face changed dramatically. Others might not understand this technique of his junior apprentice-brother’s, but he understood it very well. A sudden attack from this technique...it would be very difficult for someone to break through it. Even if one succeeded, it would only come at great effort.

“That Ji Ning broke through?” The muscular man behind Ziqi stared as he growled, “How is that possible. I’m a Fiendgod practitioner, but even I wouldn’t be able to break through if senior apprentice-brother Muse captured me.”

Junior apprentice Ju San was the newest Zifu Disciple of the five, who had only recently established his Violet Palace.

He was just an early Zifu Disciple, but he was a Fiendgod practitioner! As an early Fiendgod practitioner...his battle strength was also amazing. It didn’t matter if others injured him, but if he landed a hit on someone else, that person would die! This was the advantage which Fiendgod practitioners had; if he trained to become a late stage Fiendgod Zifu Disciple, even Dong Ziqi would address him as ‘senior apprentice-brother’.

“He broke through?”

“How old is he?”

“Senior apprentice-brother Muse’s ‘Myriad Ancient Green Vines’ technique...was broken, just like that?” That green-haired male-female pair stared as well, their faces filled with disbelief.

In their group, Muse’s status was second only to Ziqi, precisely because of how powerful he was! In particular, his ambushing abilities with the ‘Myriad Ancient Green Vines’ had caused the other fellow disciples to feel endless admiration for him. The restricting power of those green vines was indeed tremendous. How physically strong was a Fiendgod Zifu Disciple? And yet, even such a person was unable to break through.

But the person who had broken through it...was only sixteen years old! No matter how monstrous of a genius he was, it was too...

But how could they know that Ning’s physical strength was comparable to their junior apprentice-brother Ju San to begin with. In terms of his level of attainment in the sword, he vastly outstripped Ju San by many levels!

.....

“Ji Ning.”

“Ji Ning.” Ji Ninefire, Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the other members of the Ji clan all stared at Ning with surprise and delight. At the same time, they felt unbearably pleased at the looks of shock and amazement on the faces of the five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain! Simultaneously, the Ji clansmen couldn’t help but feel stunned at Ning’s power. Ninefire’s eyes actually narrowed as he sighed in his heart that he felt he was growing more and more mystified by this kid.

The Fire-Water Lotus surrounding Ning vanished, and he walked over.

“Ji Ning!” A hoarse voice rang out.

Ning turned to look.

From afar, there was a gray-robed man with an ashen, pallid face who

stood by Dong Ziqi's side. The man was staring fixedly at Ning. "You... what's the name of that sword technique of yours?"

"Longing." Ning said softly. "Rain Line!"

"Rain Line?" The gray-robed man stared wide-eyed in disbelief. "The power of the Rain Line technique of your Ji clan's [Raindrop Sutra] is this great?" He was quite familiar with the nine sword stances of the [Raindrop Sutra]."

"There are quite a few things that you don't know." Ning snorted coldly, no longer explaining.

This sword technique was birthed from the Raindrop Sutra, but it was no longer the same as the Rain Line technique of the past.

Chapter 18: The Ji Clan's Concession

"Rain Line?" Dong Ziqi murmured softly as well. The four Zifu Disciples behind him were still in a state of shock.

"This Ji Ning is even more powerful than anticipated." Ziqi pondered. "He's only sixteen years old, but even junior apprentice-brother Muse is unable to take him down! Most likely, only I will be capable of killing him." If he were to personally attack, he would have to use his Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Once the formation appeared, then the two sides would fight to the death, and there would be no chance to salvage the situation.

Dong Ziqi was very self-confident, but he also understood that the Ji clan's power wasn't weak either. If they were really to fight against each other, his side would lose one or two of their five Zifu Disciples.

If he could let the other side retreat in the face of encroaching difficulties, that would be for the best.

"Ji Ning, formidable."

"Well done."

The Ji clansmen all looked towards Ning. "Are you alright?" Ji Ishwin looked at his son. Seeing that his son was unwounded, he relaxed.

"Dong Ziqi!" Granny Shadow said in a fierce voice. "What was the meaning of this? You suddenly attacked a member of our Ji clan! All of us are present, and yet you still dare to behave so rashly."

"Your Snowdragon Mountain clansmen are too wild and unbridled."

The Ji clansmen were all very angry, but they still forced themselves not to attack. The opponents, after all, belonged to Snowdragon Mountain.

"Hahaha..." Dong Ziqi just laughed. "Sudden attack? That's a nasty way to put it. My junior apprentice-brother simply heard long ago that your Ji clan produced a genius with exceptional talents, and that even junior apprentice-brother Bei Zishan of our Snowdragon Mountain died in his hands. Today, when we saw this genius, he couldn't help but feel his

hands itch and want to have a little spar. What, can it be that a Zifu Disciple of our Snowdragon Mountain is forbidden from sparring with a member of your Ji clan?”

“You call that a spar?” Granny Shadow said in a fierce, hoarse voice.

“Naturally.” Ziqi said. “And now, it seems that this genius of your Ji clan is indeed formidable. He was able to break through the technique of my junior apprentice-brother. Admirable, admirable.”

“You...” Granny Shadow felt a fiery rage build in her belly. She had lived for nearly four centuries, but had never been angered like this before. If she didn’t have other things holding her back, she would’ve attacked long ago, but for the sake of the rest of the Ji clan, she had to endure it.

A savage look flashed past Ziqi’s eyes, and he snorted coldly. “Forget about sparring; even if we really killed that Ji Ning, what would your Ji clan do about it?” Dong Ziqi’s cold, sinister eyes swept past this group of Ji clansmen, and a disdainful smile was playing at the corner of his lips, causing the Ji clansmen to feel all the more enraged.

Swollen with arrogance!

What Ziqi was doing was being swollen with arrogance, with the intention of completely suppressing the Ji clansmen!

“Patriarch.” Truekeep was truly enraged now, and he shouted, “Our Ji clan cannot let ourselves be so easily abused as this. I’d rather live and stand fighting rather than die kneeling. Our Ji clan has made one concession after another, but Snowdragon Mountain just continues to advance and pressure us further. Do they really take our Ji clan to be made out of mud, for them to mold as they please? Let’s go all out against them! Five of them came today. We are definitely going to make sure at least half of them die!”

“Let’s go all out.”

“Patriarch, let’s go all out.”

“They refuse to give our Ji clan a way out. We won’t let them live either.” Immediately, quite a few Ji clansmen began to bellow with rage.

This caused Dong Ziqi and his group of five to be slightly startled. Snowdragon Mountain was indeed mighty, but that was thanks to the main sect! The Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain, by itself, was more powerful than the Ji clan, true, but only to a certain point...after all, everyone only had access to Zifu Disciple level fighters at most. If they really went all out, even if Snowdragon Mountain eradicated the Ji clan, the losses to the Swallow Mountain branch would still be heavy.

“Shut your mouths.” Ninefire turned and shouted mentally through his Ki, his voice reverberating within the ears of each member of the clan.

The clansmen all looked towards Ji Ninefire.

.....

“What are they discussing?” That muscular young man, Ju San, asked the other members of Snowdragon Mountain mentally.

“These local bumpkins.” The gray-robed Muse sent back. “They are used to life in the tribes, where they would rather break than bend. If you force them too far, they’ll go all out...we gave them a bit too much pressure, and so they are beginning to fight back.”

Dong Ziqi sent back confidently, “No need to worry. Ninefire is an old fellow who has lived for nearly four centuries. He is quite sly. He will remonstrate with and hold back those other clansmen.”

.....

The Ji clansmen were secretly speaking mentally to each other.

“Snowdragon Mountain has gone too far, true.” Ninefire sent mentally. “But no matter how arrogant they behave, we have to endure it. Or are we really going to fight against them?”

“But Patriarch, we can sign a transfer agreement with the Darcian Dynasty. By then, we would have the protection of the Darcian Dynasty, and we would even receive thirty percent of this elemental ore mine.” A muscular member of the Ji clan sent mentally.

“Fool!” Ninefire sent back. “To sign a transfer agreement with the Darcian Dynasty, we must first make a report, at which point an Angel of the Darcian Dynasty would come to inspect this elemental ore mine. Only at the very end would a transfer agreement be signed! This process takes time. During the course of such a long period of time, our Ji clan would most likely suffer the risk of annihilation!”

“For the sake of thirty percent of an elemental ore mine, cause the entire clan to fall into the risk of annihilation?” Ninefire shouted. “Foolishness, utter foolishness! And even if we truly do succeed in signing a transfer agreement, resulting in the Darcian Dynasty protecting our Ji clan for a thousand years...what about after that thousand years? By then, Snowdragon Mountain would come to take revenge on our Ji clan, and our clan would still end up doomed. That’s why I would rather give this entire elemental ore mine to Snowdragon Mountain.”

“But...”

“This is too infuriating.”

“Too...”

The hearts of every Ji clansman burned with rage.

“No matter how angry and unwilling to accept it we might feel, for the sake of the Ji clan, we have to endure it all.” Ninefire sighed mentally to them. “As long as the Ji clan can continue to exist and prosper, so what if we have to suffer some mistreatment?”

“If you have to blame someone, then blame us for not being strong enough. This clearly is a stroke of luck bestowed upon us by the heavens, but we are unable to accept and make use of this elemental ore mine.” Ninefire looked towards Ning. “Ji Ning, you are the most incredible talent which our Ji clan has ever produced, since the founding of the clan. If you continue developing, even becoming a Wanxiang Adept is virtually guaranteed.”

All of the clansmen looked towards Ning, their eyes filled with hope and longing.

Right.

The hopes of the Ji clan's future rise to prominence rested on him! These Xiantian lifeforms of the Central Prefecture previously had held some doubts regarding Ning's power, as prior to this, they had only heard rumors about him...but now, they had personally witnessed Ning reveal some of his power. He had even broken through the technique of a powerful Zifu Disciple expert of Snowdragon Mountain. Ning was only sixteen years old! When they thought of Ning's potential, all of them were excited.

"However, no matter how great a genius someone is, once he's dead, he's no longer a genius." Ninefire looked at Ning. "For the sake of our Ji clan, you must survive and live a long life."

Ning nodded gently.

He thought of a person...the fourth master of the Aquatic Manor. Rampart. The man who, despite the presence of so many competitors, had successfully become the personal disciple of Immortal Juhua. There was no need to say anything about his talent...but he had died as a Wanxiang Adept.

"We members of the Ji clan will firmly remember the insults we have borne today." Ninefire looked at every member of the clan. "We have to grow strong. After we grow strong, others will not dare to insult us, look down on us."

"Right." The clansmen all nodded, and Ning nodded as well.

.....

Dong Ziqi and his group of five Zifu Disciples just watched to the side. Watched as the group of Ji clansmen all forcibly restrained and swallowed the anger. Seeing the looks on their faces, they couldn't help but snicker. This was something they had seen too many times. In the past, when they had acted on orders from the main sect, those minor tribes and clans had all been forced to bend their waists and lower their heads in the face of Snowdragon Mountain.

“Dong Ziqi.” Ninefire turned his head to look towards Ziqi and the others.

“Finished chatting?” Ziqi looked at Ninefire. “But Ninefire, let me tell you clearly that no matter what, you must hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords! If you don’t hand it over, then the destruction of your Ji clan will be impending!”

The members of the Ji clan were barely able to restrain their rage, which was now painted upon their faces.

They ‘had’ to hand over the official writ?

Wasn’t this the same as forcing their Ji clan to give up their territory?

Ninefire clenched his teeth, his face ugly to behold. One word at a time, he ground out, “My Ji clan can give up the official writ and leave this land! This land will all belong to Snowdragon Mountain.”

“What.”

Everyone was stunned. Ning stared at the Patriarch in shock as well.

Ninefire continued to speak, grinding each word out. “But your Snowdragon Mountain must give our Ji clan an official writ as well, to give our Ji clan a place to resist! We’ll use the official writ for our City of Ten Thousand Swords in exchange for another official writ of a large commandery city of the Darcian Dynasty. Our Ji clan is willing to leave our homeland and depart.”

Chapter 19: Separation

Turn their backs on their homeland and leave?

Ji Ning forcibly suppressed the unwillingness in his heart. He wasn't willing. He truly wasn't willing. But he saw that all the members of the clan around him, including his father, Ji Truekeep, Granny Shadow, and the others were all silent. As long as the Ji clan could continue to survive and prosper, then they would be willing to endure even departing from their homeland!

"As long as Snowdragon Mountain will hand over an official writ." Ninefire said in a low voice. "Then our Ji clan will immediately hand over the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords!"

"Official writ?"

In the distance, Dong Ziqi and the other five looked at each other, quietly discussing this amongst each other.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, what should we do?" The green-haired woman sent mentally. "Hand over an official writ?"

"Hand over?" Ziqi looked at the green-haired woman. "Junior apprentice-sister He Xing, will you hand over one?"

The green-haired woman immediately shut her mouth.

These Zifu Disciples who had left the main sect and independently set up branches were all those who didn't have much potential, and could be considered outer members of the sect. The commandery cities of the Darcian Dynasty they had taken over in the Swallow Mountain region was their foundation as well! It was also the foundation of many of their tribes, and their forces had coalesced there long ago. How could they give them up?

Hand over an official writ?

Who would hand it over?

The elemental ore mine would be given to the main Snowdragon

Mountain Sect. Why should we sacrifice? Why should our tribes sacrifice? Every single commandery city had three Zifu Disciples. They had to all agree before the official writ would be relinquished! But who would be willing to relinquish a base they had built up over so many years?

“We aren’t willing to give ours up, but can it be that our fellow disciples in other areas would be willing to hand over a Darcian commandery city of theirs?” Ziqi shook his head. “Our Snowdragon Mountain has many branches, and those fellow disciples of those branches won’t care about us at all. How could they be so kind-hearted as to relinquish a Darcian commandery city for us?”

“At least, it’s impossible for our Ju clan. I don’t agree, and my uncle in the clan won’t agree either.” The muscular man said hurriedly. “Forget it. I refuse to believe the Ji clan will really dare to resist.”

“Right.”

The green-haired man nodded. “Force the Ji clan! If they resist, we will exterminate their clan! If they obey us, they will still be able to stay alive! I trust the Ji clan knows what they should do.”

“Right. This isn’t the first time we’ve done this.” The muscular man, Ju San, nodded as well.

“Then that’s what we’ll do.” The gray-robed Muse nodded as well.

Dong Ziqi looked at his four fellow disciples. Although not every member of the Swallow Mountain branch had come, since after all they couldn’t possibly summon everyone just for the sake of an elemental ore mine, these five represented all of the various internal factions of the Swallow Mountain branch.

“Fine.” Ziqi nodded. “Then that’s what we will do. Just as junior apprentice-brother Ju San said, this isn’t the first time we’ve done this.”

Snowdragon Mountain had many branches.

With so many branches, how could they take over enough Darcian commandery cities? Fighting for each one?

That was lunacy.

They could simply use the butcher's blade and their fame to frighten others simultaneously. In truth, the vast majority of tribes would, in the end, grit their teeth and swallow their rage, voluntarily relinquishing their official writs and obediently leaving. But of course, some battles would occasionally occur, as there were no absolutes. Dong Ziqi, however, was confident that his side's power was definitely superior to that of the Ji clan's.

.....

The Ji clan was waiting.

Although they felt heartache and unwillingness, Ning and everyone else had begun to mentally prepare for leaving their homeland. As long as the Ji clan was able to continue to survive, it would all be worth it. The Ji clan was waiting for Snowdragon mountain's response.

"Right." Ziqi let out a light snort. "Ji Ninefire."

Every Ji clansmen looked towards Ziqi, while Ninefire said hurriedly, "This is the final, bottom line of the Ji clan."

"Bottom line?" Ziqi laughed coldly. "Bottom lines are meant to be broken! Ji Ninefire, you want to trade the official writ for the City of Ten Thousand Swords for another official writ? You really are dreaming. Right now, I'll give you two options. The first option is that you defy my Snowdragon Mountain, and your Ji clan wait for annihilation. The second option is that you hand over the official writ to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. Our Snowdragon Mountain sect will permit your Ji clan to continue to live in this area. After the elemental ore mine has been fully excavated, we will return the official writ to the City of Ten Thousand Swords to you. This is the promise of myself, Dong Ziqi!"

The faces of every member of the Ji clan changed.

What?

Promise?

What a dogshit promise! What was a promise worth? Just by a saying a few empty words, he was demanding that the Ji clan hand over their official writ?

“Ziqi.” Ninefire was both furious and frantic.

“Shut your mouth.” Ziqi snapped in a fierce voice, his cold, sinister eyes staring at Ninefire. “You only need to choose...to continue surviving, or to be annihilated! This is the decision for you to make, Ji Ninefire! If you choose the annihilation of your clan...well, it has been a long time since my Eight Trigrams Dragon Blood Formation has truly drawn blood.”

The other four Zifu Disciples by his side all had savage looks flashing in their eyes. They were born in the main sect, and had each learned some powerful techniques. Their abilities were quite a bit superior to the abilities of ordinary, local experts. If they truly were to fight all out...there were three more Zifu Disciples in their headquarters. In total, they had eight Zifu Disciples!”

“Choose!” Dong Ziqi said coldly.

On the Ji clan’s side, some people were so angry that they were trembling.

“Patriarch!” Some clansmen called out loudly.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Ninefire raised his head, howling heroically. “I, Ji Ninefire, am ashamed to meet the ancestors of the Ji clan!”

Ning ground his teeth, his entire body trembling.

As for the distant Dong Ziqi and the other four, they watched this with cold smiles on their faces. The decision to give up an ancestral homeland would indeed cause someone to feel ashamed to meet one’s ancestors. But would these local bumpkins dare to resist? Resistance meant death!

“Die!” Ninefire suddenly threw out six black spheres, which transformed into six rays of light, flying directly before Dong Ziqi’s group of five.

“Thunderflame Pearls!”

Dong Ziqi and the other four were greatly startled. As they came from

the main sect, they immediately recognized these very common and extremely vicious and sinister Thunderflame Pearls. They contained the power of lightning and fire, and held extremely explosive force. Once Ki caused them to explode...they would immediately detonate, and the power of the explosions would be very shocking. The sudden explosion of six Thunderflame Pearls at a close distance could cause even Zifu Disciples to die.

“These local bumpkin clans really do have some treasures. They are actually able to throw out six Thunderflame Pearls at one go.” Even as Ziqi was frantically dodging, this thought drifted into his mind.

The five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain quickly separated into separate directions.

Boom...

Powerful explosions of thunder and flame burst forth, and dazzling serpents of electricity blasted out in every direction, while flames began to burn the entire area, causing the entire world to shake. The power was indeed astonishingly fierce.

“Arise!” A look of utter savagery was in the eyes of Ninefire, who had just thrown out those six Thunderflame Pearls.

Swoosh...

Suddenly, the desolate mountain wilderness in the nearby area was surrounded by mist and fog. Mist and fog appeared everywhere, and even Ning was only able to see to a distance of ten meters with the naked eye.

“Not good.” Dong Ziqi, who had just dodged the last attack and was feeling rather smug and disdainful, saw the mist which had appeared out of nowhere. His face instantly changed. “A bewildering formation!”

“That sly old fellow threw out those six Thunderflame Pearls not for the purpose of killing us, but to make sure that the five of us would all put some distance between us.” Ziqi’s face completely changed. He stared at the thick mist around him. He could only see to a distance of six meters with the naked eye. Previously, upon encountering the Thunderflame

Pearls, they had all dodged at full strength, trying to move as far away as they could.

Thus, those fellow disciples had all put tens of meters of distance between each other. As long as they were more than fifteen meters away from each other, within this bewildering formation, they would be affected by the master of the formation, resulting in them moving further and further away from each other.

“This Ji Ninefire is planning to completely separate the five of us.” Ziqi was both frantic and furious.

“Senior apprentice-brother!” A distance voice rang out. “It’s a bewildering formation. We’ve all been separated. Ji Ninefire, that old bastard, is planning to kill us one by one! They will definitely have several Zifu Disciples join forces to fight against each of us one by one!”

Although he could hear the sound, within the bewildering formation, directions constantly changed, and so he couldn’t tell where it came from at all.

“Fellow apprentices Ju San, Muse, He Fang, and He Xing, are all of you together?” Ziqi called out frantically.

“I’m with my older brother.” A female’s voice rang out.

“I’m by myself.”

“I’m alone as well.”

The other two voices caused Ziqi’s heart to grow cold. He understood that although He Fang and his sister were together, Ju San, Muse, and Ziqi himself had been completely separated. And even if the two He siblings joined forces...once the Ji clan attacked together, they would also be in great danger.

“This time, I really have fallen into the trap of that old fellow.” Ziqi was both frantic and furious. “But how could he have set up this formation in advance?”

.....

Separated from each other within the fog of the bewildering formation, the five Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain were in a state of panic. At this time, the Ji clan's side was both excited and shocked.

“Patriarch, why did you suddenly attack?”

“And this...this...this...what's going on with this formation?”

All of the clansmen were stunned.

Ninefire swept everyone with his gaze, then growled, “My Ji clan isn't a soft bone for them to chew on. They are riding on our heads to the point where they are even pissing and shitting on our faces. How can we possibly take any more of this? Rather than slink away like cowards, let's battle to our heart's content. In the end, my Ji clan will still have a chance!”

“Obey my orders!” Ninefire commanded.

All the clansmen awaited.

“Northwind, you go lead Ji Mo and the others to immediately board our birds to stealthily leave Swallow Mountain in three different streams.” Ninefire said. “They will pass down the lineage of the Ji clan.”

“Yes.”

“Ji Winterpool, immediately head to Swallow Mountain City and make a report to the Darcian Dynasty that an elemental ore mine has appeared within the territory of the Ji clan. I entrust this task to you. Remember, arrange for multiple messengers. You have to ensure that at least one group makes it to Swallow Mountain City.”

“Yes.”

Ninefire swept the rest with his gaze. “Everyone else who is not at the Zifu Disciple level, return to the City of Ten Thousand Swords. Leave this place to us. Go.”

With a thud, these members of the Ji clan all fell to their knees. They looked at Ninefire, Ning, Truekeep, Ishwin. Although they didn't say anything, all of them then quickly left.

“We are the only ones left here.” Ninefire swept the remaining people with his gaze. “These five arrogant Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain have already been separated by my formation. As long as we attack them one by one, we can completely exterminate them!”

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “You are the hope of our Ji clan, and the future of our Ji clan. If the situation truly grows dire, you are to immediately use the Traceless Talisman to flee! As long as you survive, our Ji clan will not be exterminated!”

“Yes.” Ning gritted his teeth and replied.

“Prepare to kill, then.” Ninefire began to laugh loudly. “It’s been so many years since I’ve gone wild. I suddenly feel much younger, and filled with anticipation, like the first time I entered my marital bed!”

Chapter 20: Each Showing Their Abilities

“Patriarch, how did you come up with the idea in advance of setting up a formation?” Ji Truekeep couldn’t help but ask.

This was the question which Ji Ning and the others had on their minds as well. None of them had seen the Patriarch set up the formation, and after the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain had come over...there was no time to set up a formation either.

Ji Ninefire glanced at the people before him. “When considering matters, one needs to take a longer view of things. When I first had an inkling of how large this elemental ore mine was, I grew concerned that it would attract the greed of Snowdragon Mountain, and so I began to take precautions against them! What if Snowdragon Mountain came and tried to pressure us? Thus, early on, I set down the formation in the area around us. If we didn’t end up fighting, fine. If we did though, then we naturally have to seize the upper hand. As for why I didn’t tell the rest of you? If I told you and let you all be aware of the great formation around us, would you have all displayed such rage and grief? Snowdragon Mountain’s people probably would have realized, found the formation, and broken through it long ago.”

“Uh...” Ning and the others all nodded.

But Ning understood as well...

Although this wasn’t very strange or mysterious once explained, earlier, everyone had been stunned and astonished by the size and scale of this elemental ore mine. None of them, however, had thought to set down a formation first. This was a matter of experience and foresight!

“No matter what, my actions cause me to feel ashamed to meet the ancestors of the Ji clan. I’ve let the Ji clan fall into peril.” Ninefire said in a low voice. “I didn’t want to choose this path at all. Choosing this path means fighting Snowdragon Mountain head on. My Ji clan must sign an agreement as soon as possible with the Darcian Dynasty. Once we sign the agreement, we will at least be guaranteed of a thousand years of safety. A

thousand years from now, I have faith that our Ji clan would have risen to prominence. Even if we are still weak though, a thousand years is enough time for our Ji clan to have made our arrangements.”

“Now...”

“Let’s go kill them, as many as we can. The more we kill, the less pressure our Ji clan will be under.” Ninefire swept his gaze across everyone. Granny Shadow. The old servant, Ah Xing. Truekeep. Ishwin. Ning. These were the top-tier fighters of the Ji clan. “I, Shadow, Ah Xing, and Ning will join forces to kill the He siblings! Truekeep, Ishwin, the two of you go deal with Ju San.”

“Yes.”

“Yes.” Everyone acknowledged the order.

Shadow hurriedly asked, “Then what about Dong Ziqi? He’s a calamity waiting to happen. We must eradicate him early on.”

“He and Muse have located each other and joined forces already.” Ninefire said. “We will deal with them in the end.”

“Let’s go. I’ll guide you through the fog.” Ninefire immediately advanced, and Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, and Ning all followed him. The four of them were the most powerful four members of the Ji clan. As for Truekeep and Ishwin, a corridor naturally formed for them through the mist, and they advanced at high speed as well.

.....

Within the formation.

Dong Ziqi’s face was icy and sinister. “I actually fell into the old crook’s scheme.” In the area around him, eight black crystal balls appeared out of nowhere, each of which was the size of a person’s skull. Within them, a faint image of a draconic shadow could be seen swimming about. The eight bloody trigrams on the black robe he was wearing immediately radiated a bloody light.

The bloody light encompassed those eight distant black crystal balls.

“Arise!”

One enormous, shadowy, blood-colored dragon after another appeared in front of Ziqi. There were eight shadowy blood-colored dragons. They swirled amongst each other, constantly roving about within the formation.

“Fellow disciples, stay where you are and do not move.” Ziqi shouted, while at the same time, he controlled his Eight Trigram Blood Dragons Formation, constantly expanding the scope of the formation.

As the scope of the formation increased, those eight shadowy blood dragons also swam about in a wider and wider area. Soon, the width of the formation reached a scope of three hundred meters, encompassing the nearby Muse within it as well. This sort of large formation, which spread out in every direction...made it so that even in a bewildering formation, there was no way one would be completely bewildered!

“Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi.” The gray-robed man, Muse, said in surprised delight. He was overjoyed at having been brought within the perimeters of the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

“Where are our other fellow disciples?” Ziqi looked around him.

“Not here.” Muse shook his head. “I’m the only one within your Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.”

Dong Ziqi ground his teeth, then immediately called out in a high voice, “I am together with fellow disciple Muse. He Fang, He Xing, the two of you need to be careful. And Ju San...take care of yourself.”

“Don’t worry.”

“We siblings aren’t afraid of them.”

“If they want to kill me, I’ll make sure one of them dies as well!”

Three voices rang out.

“Damnable.” Dong Ziqi said unhappily. “We fell into that old crook’s trap. Otherwise, if the five of us joined forces, how could we be put into such a situation by the likes of the Ji clan? I myself am able to kill more than half of them. Junior apprentice-brother Muse, your accomplishments

in the Myriad Ancient Green Vines technique are quite profound. If you use the Myriad Ancient Green Vines technique, can you break this formation?”

“It would be very difficult.” Muse shook his head. “Even if I could break it, I would need a very long time, and I probably wouldn’t have enough Ki energy.”

“Use it as much as you can.” Ziqi said. “I have a bottle of Ki recovery pills. Take it.”

“Fine.” Muse gritted his teeth. “Then I’ll hand over the defense to you, senior apprentice-brother.”

Ziqi said confidently, “You are within my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Even if several of them attack together...I have no fear of them. The only thing I’m afraid of is that they won’t come for me! How detestable...if I had known earlier, I would’ve started to kill them from the start. Now, I can’t even find them, even though I want to kill them.” He, by himself, was equal to his other four fellow disciples if they joined forces. But unfortunately, although he had power, he had no place to exert it.

“Arise.”

Muse stood there, and a single seed fell into the ground.

Whoosh!

Many tendrils suddenly grew out from that seed, wildly spreading out in every direction.

“Bewildering formations will bewilder the senses.” Muse said in a low voice. “My vines will be affected by the bewildering formation as well. It will be hard for them to move in the correct direction. Still, these vines can constantly grow and expand towards empty areas...as long as they continuously fill up the area, if they continuously grow, then naturally they’ll be able to cover the entire formation, and perhaps even go beyond it. My mind is one with these vines. So long as the vines are able to leave the formation, I will know it.”

“But what I don’t know is how large this formation is. After all, when the

diameter expands tenfold, the number of tendrils I need to grow is increased a hundredfold. The larger the formation is, the more exhausting it will be for my Ki.” Muse didn’t feel much confidence.

“Let’s go all out.” Ziqi gritted his teeth. “Trapped here, the only thing that will happen is that we will be butchered as they please.”

“Right.” Muse didn’t say anything further, striving to expand and empower his technique.

Rustle, rustle...

Countless vines frantically grew out and elongated, but in the bewildering formation, where they had no sense of direction, these vines grew out in a wild, unordered manner as well. Still, one thing was certain... they were to grow in the direction of areas where there were no vines! To cover as much new space as they could!

.....

In another area.

Ning, Ninefire, and the others were present.

“The He siblings are up front.” Ninefire said. “I’ll launch the first attack, and then part open the mist. You will see the two of them. All of you, immediately use killing attacks.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

Whoosh!

More than seven hundred sword-type magic treasures suddenly appeared in the area around Ning, each of which glowed with a hazy white light. The swords gently ebbed and flowed, unceasingly summoning and coalescing the power of the world. Ning’s Ki was constantly being transformed through these magic swords as well, and in front of him, a dazzling, eye-catching white sword light had taken form.

[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] – Level Nine!

“What a sharp sword light.” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the old servant, Ah Xing, were shocked. Although they hadn’t interacted with it,

they could sense how sharp this sword light was.

Granny Shadow pointed with her finger, and in front of her, three flying swords appeared as well, each of which glowed with a faint, fiery light.

Next to her, the old servant Ah Xing lifted his hand, and a warhammer appeared within it.

“Let’s do it.” Ninefire waved his hand, and a mottled, five-colored flying sword suddenly pierced through the air. Ninefire was famous for using poisons and formations...although this flying sword was a ranked magic treasure, to be more precise, it was a poison sword.

.....

A hundred meters in front of Ning, He Fang and He Xing, brother and sister, were present. The two had used a number of Dao-seals, and their bodies were covered by golden light. At the same time, two magic treasures were constantly flying around them, one which looked like an iron pestle, while the other was a strange-looking tiled jar magic treasure.

“We can’t see our surroundings. They will definitely ambush us. Be careful.” The green-haired man, He Fang, said softly.

“Right.” His younger sister, He Xing, was incomparably cautious as well. Suddenly...

A five-colored flying sword suddenly descended at an astonishing speed. However, as the He siblings were constantly on-guarded, they immediately used their techniques to defend.

“Whoosh...”

The floating tiled jar suddenly emitted a large amount of green liquid into a watery curtain, which was incomparably tough and unyielding. Once the five-colored flying sword pierced into the curtain of green liquid, the speed of it immediately slowed greatly.

“Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!”

Three flying swords glowing with fiery light slashed through the skies as well. It was the three flying swords of Granny Shadow.

This instantly caused the faces of He Fang and He Xing, brother and sister, to change greatly. They hurriedly worked to block it as well, but the water curtain was beginning to be unable to withstand it.

“Bang!” An enormous black warhammer, carrying even more incomparably ferocious power, smashed straight through the quivering water curtain, and then smashed onto the golden light covering the body of He Xing, the younger sister. The golden light instantly trembled violently, as though it was about to shatter.

“Not good.”

“Quick, let’s run. If we stay here, we’re just going to serve as punching bags.” He Fang and He Xing, after having suffered successive strikes, had begun to panic. Clearly, there were quite a few enemies.

Swish!

A dazzling sword light suddenly slashed out in a lonely arc, leaving behind a beautiful, dreary afterimage as it instantly pierced through the quivering barrier of golden light covering He Xing’s body...

Chapter 21: The Zifu Lake

When Ji Ning's [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] sword light swept down towards them, the graceful, lithe-bodied He Xing's face changed. "What a terrifying sword light! There're no other options!" Her green hair suddenly emitted a dazzling green light while at the same time, her entire body dimly glowed with a green aura. As for that sword light which had just pierced through the golden aura protecting her body, it clashed straight against that green aura. The green aura trembled, and rippling runes appeared on its surface, but in the end, with a boom, it blew apart.

The remaining energy in the sword light was quite weak now, so weak that it wasn't even able to pierce through the protective magic treasure He Xing was wearing.

"Elder Brother! The talisman which Master gave us was broken through in just one attack." He Xing said frantically.

This was too terrifying.

The power of that sword light was most likely close to that of a casual blow from a Wanxiang Adept. Even the talisman her master had given her to protect her was only able to take a single blow.

"Little Sister, let's go all out." Mu Fang gritted his teeth. "We can't hope for a lucky break to occur. We have to treat this as our potential tomb, for us to have a chance of surviving."

"Right." Xing nodded.

A look of resoluteness appeared in the eyes of these two siblings. Their auras grew savage, and a layer of bloody light arose on their skin.

"Forbidden arts!" The distant attackers, Ji Ninefire, Ji Ning, Granny Shadow, the old servant Ah Xing saw this, and their faces changed.

Forbidden arts...

Generally speaking, they referred to forbidden techniques that were used through sacrificing one's own lifespan. They could only be used at enormous cost, and once the cost was made, it was very hard to recover

from it. But precisely because the cost was great, the power one had upon using a forbidden art would rapidly rise as well.

“You want to kill us? Come, then.”

“Come.”

After having used a forbidden technique, He Xing and He Fang both had savagery in their eyes.

“They are like trapped beasts right now.” Ninefire hurriedly sent mentally to the others. “Although they are surrounded and attacked by us, they are still Zifu Disciples, and they’ve used forbidden techniques. If we aren’t careful, some of us might die. We have to be cautious. We have the advantage. I’d rather we give up some opportunities than risk our lives. We just have to find a single good opportunity, at which point we can kill them.”

“Right.” Granny Shadow narrowed her eyes.

The old servant, Ah Xing, just stared at the distant He siblings, controlling that great warhammer of his.

As for Ning, he unleashed a second sword light.

The four were working together!

They wildly attacked the He siblings in unison. Amongst these five enemy Zifu Disciples, the He siblings actually had only average strength; they were ranked behind Dong Ziqi and Muse! As for Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing, they were old fellows who had lived for nearly four centuries, each of whom were actually a good amount more powerful than the He siblings. And that’s not even mentioning the monstrous Ji Ning!

Only through using forbidden arts were the He siblings capable of just barely holding off the joint attacks of these four.

“Despicable, sly Ji clansmen.” He Fang and He Xing were cursing wildly while controlling their magic treasures to resist. Because they had used forbidden arts, their ability to control magic treasures had clearly increased...in particular, the water curtain which flew out from the tiled

jar was actually able to resist Ning's [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]!

This caused Ning to sigh in his heart.

His enemies were Zifu Disciples, while he himself only had peak Xiantian-level Ki. For him to be able to fight against someone at a higher level who was even using forbidden arts...the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] should be proud of itself.

"Elder Brother, that Ji Ning is too powerful." He Xing had a look of despair in her eyes. "Even going all out, I'm only able to block him alone."

"I'm almost unable to hold out any longer as well." He Fang was simultaneously blocking the other three.

Suddenly...

At the same instant, He Fang and He Xing each released a Dao-seal radiating a black light from their hands. They instantly activated the pair of Dao-seals, which immediately transformed into tens of rays of black light which quickly attacked Ninefire and the other three! Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the old servant Ah Xing were shocked, and they hurriedly used what abilities they had to resist. As for Ning, he wielded two swords in his hands, with the Fire-Water Lotus swiveling around his body.

"Boomboomboom..." The rays of black light pierced directly through the Fire-Water Lotus, but were blocked by Ning's Darknorth Swords.

But Ning couldn't help but stagger backwards, taking six heavy steps back, the ground cracking with each step.

"Such power." Ning stared at his waist. A large hole had been pierced through his waist, but in the blink of an eye, his flesh quickly grew out, regenerating the wound and not leaving behind a single scar.

"Ji Ning, it's good that we have you. Otherwise, that technique alone would have wounded us, and perhaps one of us would even have died." Ninefire was frightened as well. That black light had simply been too fast. Once it pierced through their bodies...the other three were all Ki Refiners. If they weren't careful, they would lose their lives.

Granny Shadow sent mentally as well, “These two really live up to their reputation as being members from the main sect. They have so many techniques. If we aren’t careful, we might fall to one of them. Let’s pull away slightly; at a longer distance, it’ll be easier for us to deal with them.”

“Right.” Ninefire nodded. “The two of them are close to the breaking point. If we keep it up a little longer, they will definitely die.”

Hearing this, Ning frowned.

The Patriarch and the other two were all Zifu-level Ki Refiners. They didn’t dare fight in close quarters combat, because in close quarters combat, if one suffered an attack that was too fast and which didn’t give one a chance to dodge, one could easily die. It was correct for them to decide to pull away...but Ning himself was a Fiendgod Body Refiner! How long would it take for them to continue wasting time like this? They had to end this quickly!

“Patriarch, leave it to me.” Ning shouted mentally to them, while at the same time, a pair of wing-type magic treasures appeared out of nowhere on his back. The wings fluttered, and Ning soared into the air like a giant Roc, instantly appearing in front of He Fang and He Xing, the two siblings.

“Careful.” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing were all shocked, but they knew that Ning was a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and that he trained in the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]. They weren’t too worried about him.

“Perfect timing.” He Fang and He Xing, the two siblings, were startled, then delighted.

Prior to this, they had been filled with rage.

Ninefire and the others had been too crafty; they had insisted on fighting at a distance, not giving the two of them a chance to fight back! The two were all but standing there and letting others beat down on them. They didn’t dare to make the slightest mistake, because if they did, the enemies would seize the chance to kill them. But who could forever be perfect and never make a mistake? Just as they were feeling despair, Ji Ning charged over.

“After killing you, our deaths would have been worth it.”

“The genius of the Ji clan.”

The He siblings had gone mad in their desire to kill Ning.

But Ning, moving like a giant Roc, arced outwards in a curving, solitary line as he attacked He Xing. His target was her, as she had already used up a protective talisman. In front of Ning, there was a flash of sword light, and the Darknorth Swords in his hands executed his most powerful attack...Rain Line!

“Bang!”

The sword light flashed outwards!

He Xing’s beautiful head was sent flying into the air, her eyes still filled with disbelief and shock.

“You...you...” The nearby He Fang stared at Ning.

There was a wound on Ning’s head, which carved straight through his forehead, but this wound quickly healed. The reason why he was able to kill He Xing, a Zifu Disciple, in a single exchange was not only that Ning’s swordplay vastly outstripped the opponent’s; it was also because Ning fought in a way where the two of them would both take ‘lethal’ wounds, allowing her to stab him with her sword. This was why he was able to kill her in a single exchange.

“You...have reached the Zifu Disciple level as a Fiendgod as well?” He Fang didn’t dare believe it.

Killing a Fiendgod Body Refiner was far more difficult than killing a Ki Refiner.

Previously, Ning had used the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], which was clearly a Ki Refiner technique. And Ning was only sixteen years old...He Fang and He Xing had both believed that given his age, Ning should only have opened his Violet Palace as a Ki Refiner! He most likely had yet to be able to open his Violet Palace as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and should only be a Xiantian-stage lifeform. Generally speaking, a

Xiantian-level Fiendgod Body Refiner's head was still a critical area. Even someone who trained in the number one technique, the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens], would have to reach the peak Xiantian level before having no critical areas anywhere in the body. That was why He Xing had wanted to sacrifice her life in that exchange.

“Little Sister.” He Fang stared at the corpse on the ground, then suddenly let out a heroic howl. “Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, avenge us and annihilate the Ji clan!!!”

“Back.” Ning's face changed, and his wing-type magic treasure fluttered as he frantically retreated.

“Boom.”

He Fang suddenly exploded.

The Zifu Violet Palace in his body was like an enormous lake which contained endless amounts of lake water. This lake water was actually liquefied Ki energy! When He Fang detonated his Zifu 'lake', all of the liquefied Ki energy that had accumulated in his Zifu instantly transformed into usable Ki. Even if his body had to blow apart, he wanted to make this liquefied Ki instantly transform and blast outwards. The power of this elemental blast was simply terrifying.

The savage, boundless wave of Ki spread out, rippling in every direction! Instantly, the turbid wave of elemental Ki blasted into the frantically retreating Ji Ning, submerging him within it!

BOOM!!!

“Ji Ning!”

“Ji Ning!” The distant Ji Ninefire and the other two were shocked.

Chapter 22: Two More Remaining

Although Ji Ning had sensed in advance that something bad was going to happen, and thus had immediately used the Windwing Evasion to retreat, he was still struck on the back by the enormous surge of power, and his entire body was knocked helplessly flying, smashing a deep crater into the ground.

“Ji Ning, are you alright?”

“Ji Ning.”

The distant Ji Ninefire and the other two hurriedly flew over, staring into that deep crater with concern. Ning lay deep within the crater, fresh, crimson blood splattered everywhere. The wing-type magic treasure on his back was already twisted...but within the crater, Ning was quickly recovering. He stretched his hand out, lifting himself upwards and quickly returning to his feet.

“I’m fine.” Ning said hoarsely. That earlier explosive force had damaged even his throat. As he arose from the deep crater, the various wounds on his back were quickly healing, and the terrifying injuries his body had sustained were rapidly regenerating. Moments later, not even a scar could be seen. As for Ning’s protective magic armor, it quickly reformed into the shape of the beast fur clothes his mother had made for him.

This caused Ninefire and the other two to sigh in amazement. This was what Ki Refiners like them envied the most with regards to Fiendgod Body Refiners.

If it was them, they probably would have died long ago!

“The power of a detonating Zifu ‘lake’ truly is terrifying.” Ning sighed in amazement.

Establishing the ‘Violet Palace’ was part of the Immortal path. The Zifu was like a lake that contained liquefied Ki energy. The Zifu lake was thus the foundation for an Immortal practitioner! A fruit tree that wished to bloom and birth fruits had to have a patch of land, while Immortal

practitioners who wished to reach the Wanxiang level or become a Primal Immortal...had to have a Zifu lake! This was their foundation. Zifu Disciples would constantly accumulate their Ki energy, expanding the size of that lake...

But once the accumulated Ki energy was detonated, the first to die from the explosion would be the practitioner! Only then would others be hit by the explosion.

“This is why the three of us didn’t dare to attack in close combat. Only you, a Fiendgod Body Refiner, would dare draw near.” Ninefire said.

“Formidable.” Ning said softly.

“The lifeforce possessed by Fiendgods truly is astonishing.” Granny Shadow said hoarsely.

.....

In a different area.

The eight shadowy blood dragons of the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation roved about sinuously. In the center were Muse and Dong Ziqi. Ziqi had a gloomy look on his face, and his eyes were filled with a boundless killing intent. He truly wished to charge out and kill them. But that group of Ji clan cowards didn’t dare to come face him.

“Little Sister! Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi, avenge us and annihilate the Ji clan!!!” A fierce voice suddenly rang out, and then...a deafening, massive explosion.

Muse, seated in the lotus position, opened his eyes, which were filled with a look of sorrow. “The He siblings are dead.”

“Not only dead; he even detonated his own Zifu lake. He was forced into dire straits.” Ziqi’s voice was hoarse, and his eyes were filled with rage. He, Dong Ziqi, had actually been forced into such a terrible situation, and by the puny little Ji clan. This caused the look on Ziqi’s face to become all the more terrible. He howled savagely, “I, Dong Ziqi, swear that I will definitely annihilate the Ji clan! Definitely!” His roar rang out.

“I will definitely annihilate the Ji clan! Definitely!!!”

As Ning heard this, his face changed slightly. He could sense the wild savagery and killing intent held within this shout. By his side, Ninefire just said coldly, “If we didn’t kill them, they would still annihilate our Ji clan for not handing over the official writ! If they want to kill us, then they need to be prepared for the possibility that we might kill them. Screaming loudly now is the act of a coward.”

“Come. Let’s go deal with Dong Ziqi.” Granny Shadow ground her teeth, speaking in a hoarse voice.

“Right.” The old servant, Ah Xing, acknowledged.

Ning was filled with boundless killing intent as well...against these enemy forces who wanted to annihilate the Ji clan and give them no options, Ning wouldn’t feel a hint of pity!

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire just frowned. “Immediately go to your father’s place. Assist them in killing Ju San.”

“My father?” Ning was startled.

Can it be that his father, Ji Ishwin, and Ji Truekeep had met with trouble in their combined effort to deal with that ‘Jusan’?

“It’s Muse.” Ninefire said urgently. “Muse is currently using a magical technique, causing a large number of vines to rapidly grow out nonstop. They’ve already grown near the place where your father is. Once those vines encounter Ju San...! Dong Ziqi and Muse will quickly follow the vines and rejoin with Ju San! Once the three join forces, it will be even more difficult to kill them.”

A path through the mist had already appeared in front of Ning.

“I’ll go.” Ning transformed into a blurred shadow, quickly advancing forward.

“We’ll go deal with Dong Ziqi and Muse.” Ninefire looked towards Granny Shadow and Ah Xing. “We don’t have to kill them, but we need to disturb that Muse...ideally, making it so that Muse won’t be able to

continue to use that technique of his. Those vines have grown so large... Muse definitely had to use up quite a bit of mental energy and Ki."

"Right." Granny Shadow and Ah Xing both nodded.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The three quickly hurried towards Ziqi...and as for Ning, as he flew forward, he saw the vines rapidly growing, but by relying on the Windwing Evasion, he was able to dodge past them and not touch them.

Soon.

From far away, the sound of explosions could be heard, and the fog grew thin as well. Ning saw two figures standing in the distance; it was his own father, Ishwin, and his clansman, Truekeep.

"Oh? Father isn't using any magic treasures. Can it be that Father hasn't established his Zifu yet?" As Ning hurried over, he discovered that Truekeep was currently controlling magic treasures to battle against that muscular man named Ju San, while Ning's father, Ishwin, was brandishing his sword, releasing one last after another of sword light, each of which flowed out like a stream of water, constantly racing towards that muscular Ju San. Those blasts of sword light seemed like entangling threads, constantly restricting and binding Ju San.

Truekeep was the main force, while Ishwin was support!

"Damnable." Ju San bellowed.

"From what the Patriarch previously said, it seems as though my father is a Zifu Disciple. But why is it that I've never seen Father ride on a magic treasure?" Ning was puzzled. "In fact, that year, when I suffered the attack from Serpentwing, when Father pursued Serpentwing, he didn't ride on a magic treasure back then either. What's the reason for this?"

Ning had asked his father before, but his father had refused to answer.

"After this battle, I'll ask the Patriarch." Ning buried these doubts in his heart, while at the same time, a pair of Darknorth Swords appeared in his hands, while the wings on his back fluttered, sending him piercing

through the air.

Prior to this, when He Fang had detonated his own Zifu Lake, the previous pair of wing-type magic treasures had been destroyed, but fortunately, Ning had quite a few sets of these unranked treasures.

“Father, Uncle Truekeep! Leave this Ju San to me!” Ning shouted loudly, then transformed into a ray of light, charging towards Ju San.

Ishwin and Truekeep both turned to look. “Ji Ning!”

“Hahaha, perfect!” From afar, mighty Ju San, who had power but no place to expend it, watched as Ning charged towards him. He was overjoyed! He was a Zifu Fiendgod Body Refiner! Fiendgod Body Refiners loved to engage in close quarters combat. Prior to this, Truekeep and Ishwin had continuously kept far away from him, and he, Ju San, was not proficient in movement techniques, and thus was completely unable to catch up.

To be constantly beaten down on, but be unable to catch up.

What sort of torment was this!

Although he had opened up his Zifu as a Ki Refiner as well, he hadn’t spent too much time and effort on learning how to ride magic treasures. His primary efforts had been expended on close quarters combat.

“Come, come, come. Let me take a look at this genius of the Ji clan and see how powerful you are.” Behind Ju San, a pair of black wings had appeared. As he went forward to engage Ning, he clearly was quite agile.

“Wing-type magic treasure?” Ning looked at the pair of wings on Ju San’s back, and his eyes couldn’t help but light up. The vast majority of Fiendgod Body Refiners would use wings, so as to make them more agile. “It should be a ranked magic treasure. I was worrying about how, after breaking through to the Zifu level, I wouldn’t have any ranked wing-type magic treasures.”

Boom!

Boom!

Two people. One came from the main sect of Snowdragon Mountain, and although he trained in a fairly ordinary Fiendgod Body Refining technique, known as the [Mighty Demon – Introductory], he was an early Zifu Disciple. Although the name of this technique seemed quite ordinary, it was quite a bit superior to the techniques the Ji clan possessed, such as the [Sutra of the Future Buddha] or [Indestructible Blood Fiend], even though those techniques had more impressive-sounding names. Generally speaking, the more powerful a sect was, the more modest the names their techniques would be.

As for the other person, this person trained in the technique that even in the Fiendgod Era was the indisputable number one Fiendgod Body Refining technique, the [Scarlet Diagram of the Nine Shining Heavens]. But this person was only a peak Xiantian.

“BANG!” “BANG!”

Ju San was wielding a greataxe, while Ning was wielding a pair of swords.

The two exchanged blows...

It was like a pair of juvenile Fiendgods from back in the Primordial Era who were fighting against each other. Instantly, the earth began to quake, then split apart, sending rocks flying everywhere! The two both had wing-type magic treasures behind them, and they they wildly battled each other in close quarters combat, completely unafraid of the occasional wounds they suffered. As for Ju San’s body, one wound after another appeared atop it.

“This Ju San’s axecraft is quite impressive. The greataxe is very large, making it so that when it defends, it is almost like a buckler.” Ning said to himself.

“Ji Ning has actually reached the Zifu level as a Fiendgod practitioner as well.” Ju San was even more shocked. “And his usage of dual swords is all the more marvelous and skilled. I’ve focused on my axecraft for nearly a century, but I actually can’t compare to his swordcraft! I’m at a disadvantage with every exchange...” Right now, he had only left two

wounds on Ning's body, and that was only because Ning had willingly accepted the blow in order to deliver one to him as well. But as for Ju San, his body had suffered over a hundred wounds on it by now. But of course, all of them had healed automatically.

Ning's swordplay became even more ferocious and wild.

"Faster, faster, faster!"

Ning understood that as the opponent used a heavy weapon, the greataxe, he himself had to fight based on his speed. The faster Ning was, the more flaws the enemy would reveal.

"Like the wind!"

"Like the flame!"

Ning's left and right hands each held a sword, but they used completely different swordplay techniques. One sword was as illusory as the wind, while the other sword was as aggressively scorching as a flame. Both of them were shockingly fast, and the two worked in unison, creating an explosive combination. The power of the two techniques multiplied, feeding off each other!

"Faster! Even faster!" Ning battled wildly against Ju San, raining down blows upon him.

Ju San's movements became disordered, unable to keep up.

"SLASH!"

A sword blow that was as strangely agile and graceful as the wind slashed past the greataxe, and also slashed through Jusan's waist. Crunch. Blood flew everywhere, and Ju San was bisected.

"Here's my chance." Ning instantly entered a berserk mode.

Thunderflash Flint!

Thunderflash Flint!

Thunderflash Flint!

Ning's two swords simultaneously executed this technique. There was

nothing weird about this technique, nothing savage about it; all it had was speed! One ray after another of sword light wildly chopped down on the bisected halves of Ju San's body, causing Ju San's body to constantly shatter, but Ju San's head continued to roar, "It won't be so easy to kill a Fiendgod Body Refiner!"

"Fire-Water Lotus." Ning executed his final, killing stroke.

Those countless pieces of Ju San's body became enveloped within a Fire-Water Lotus. The petals of the fire and water slowly swiveled against each other. After five years of training, the murderous grinding power of Ning's Fire-Water Lotus had reached a terrifyingly strong level. These completely defenseless chunks of bloody flesh were completely ground into dust.

Grind! Grind! Grind!

The pieces of bloody flesh tried frantically to reconnect to each other, reforming into a person. But they were constantly being ground down by the Fire-Water Lotus!

Rumble...

The chunks of bloody flesh were completely ground to dust, completely unable to reform once more.

Ju San! Dead!

"Looks like I acquired a set of ranked wing-type magic treasures in advance." Ning stretched his hand out, collecting the nearby spoils, including the wing-type magic treasures, the greataxe, the protective magic-treasures, and the various other magic treasures.

Ning turned to look.

Truekeep and Ishwin stood there watching from afar, looks of disbelief and shock on their faces. They had watched as two Fiendgod experts battled wildly and viciously against each other...it was power against power, and as soon as one fell, the other wildly charged forward to dismember him, giving him no chance at all to recover. Fortunately, Ning had his Fire-Water Lotus, as otherwise it would have been hard for him to so quickly dispose of this Ju San.

“Let’s go.” Ning said hurriedly. “Father, Uncle Truekeep, we need to hurry up and rejoin the Patriarch. There are only two more remaining!”

“There are only two more remaining?” Truekeep and Ishwin were excited as well. They hadn’t imagined that in this battle, the Ji clan would actually have achieved such a glorious success, with only two Zifu Disciples remaining now.

However, it was the most powerful two!

“Kill them.”

Ning, Ishwin, and Truekeep transferred into rays of light, hurrying back to regroup with Ninefire and the others...

Chapter 23: Life And Death – Two Choices

Moments later.

A faint fog surrounded the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, and one shadowy blood dragon after another swam about, look towards Ji Ning, Ji Ninefire, and the rest of the six.

“Ji Ning, don’t charge in.”

“I want to give him a try.” With a thought, Ning summoned more than seven hundred weapon-type magic treasures, which undulated up and down in the air around him, all of them radiating a dim glow. In front of Ning formed an irresistible, unblockable sword light. With a thought, the sword light formed from the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] shot through the air.

[Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] – Level Nine!

“Swish!”

The dazzling sword light charged straight into the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, and in the instant that it did so, the shadowy blood dragons immediately bellowed and charged forth. Cracklecracklecrackle... the sword light just managed to eradicate a single shadowy blood dragon before the power of the sword light was used up, but soon, the shadowy blood dragon once more reformed.

“What.” Ning was amazed. “I was only able to destroy a single dragon? And it almost immediately reformed?”

Dong Ziqi, within the formation, gave the distant Ning a cold, insidious look. In a hoarse voice, he said, “You live up to your reputation as being the genius of the Ji clan. Only sixteen years old...and yet you are able to destroy one of the dragons of my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. However, the little bit of power you have is far from being sufficient.”

“Ning, don’t charge in.” Ninefire sent mentally in a frantic voice. “This sort of formation is perfectly suited to countering Fiendgod Body Refiners. As soon as you charge within, you’ll be attacked by all eight of those blood

dragons, and they will rip you to pieces.”

“I know.” Ning nodded.

Although Fiendgod Body Refiners were superior to Ki Refiners...there was no such thing as an absolute truth!

Ki Refiners had their powerful experts as well, who were able to fight against those at a higher level as them. The [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] was one such example! Or, for example, those Ki Refiners who bred countless venomous pests, which would be released out in a flood, devouring everything in their path. Fiendgod Body Refiners were more powerful, yes...but that was as a whole. On an individual level, there were incomparably glorious and talented Ki Refiners as well.

“The six of us should join forces to attack and see if we have any chance of winning.” A killing intent flashed through the eyes of Ninefire.

A flying sword flew through the air!

Venomous bugs danced out!

A sword light pierced forward!

In an instant, the entire world seemed to be filled with various techniques and attacks, which flew towards the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. Within the formation, Ziqi laughed wildly. “Excellent!” Those eight shadowy blood dragons, which had been peacefully swimming about, suddenly turned savage as they charged forward to welcome those attacks. They blocked one magic treasure after another, and as some of the dragons dispersed, they quickly reformed.

The eight shadowy blood dragons coiled about in a circular rhythm, forcibly taking on the attacks of Ning and the rest of the six.

“Cowards of the Ji clan, if you have any ability, come into my Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.” Seeing that the attacks had been completely blocked, Dong Ziqi, standing within the formation, became even more arrogant. “You killed three of my fellow disciples because you had the advantage of numbers. In terms of actual ability, how could your Ji clan be a match for us? If we to really fight, I, Dong Ziqi, would be able to

annihilate you all!”

Outside the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, Ninefire, Granny Shadow, Ah Xing, Ishwin, Truekeep, and Ning were astonished at the power of this formation.

“Formidable.” Ninefire sent mentally. “Although I have long heard of the power of Dong Ziqi’s Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, I’ve never fought against it. It seems that the eight dragons within the formation are all comparable to a peak Zifu Disciple. With the eight joining forces...the power is truly astonishing. Even if the six of us truly want to go all out and kill him, most likely three of us would die.”

“There’s nothing in life that has no risk.” Granny Shadow sent. “Let’s kill this Dong Ziqi!”

“Our Ji clan has too few Zifu Disciples! But Snowdragon Mountain has plenty of them. It isn’t worth it for us to die alongside these two.” Ninefire refuted.

Ning stared at the distant Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

What to do?

After having attacked for the amount of time needed to brew tea, although Ning had only occasionally released an attack from his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], the Ki energy in his body was more than half used up.

“Hold your attacks.” Ninefire sent. “We’ve attacked together for so long now, but we haven’t had a single chance for breaking through. If we don’t take any risks, we won’t be able to kill Dong Ziqi. In addition, those vines are constantly growing outwards. Soon, they’ll have exited the perimeters of my bewildering formation. Forget it. We’ll just let them go this time.”

“Let them go?” Truekeep’s eyes were filled with disbelief. “Patriarch, if we lose this opportunity, in the future, Dong Ziqi will definitely come together with other Zifu Disciples. Killing him will be even more difficult.”

“Fool.” Ninefire sent furiously. “We aren’t trying to annihilate Snowdragon Mountain. What we are trying to do...is to let the Ji clan

survive for a longer period of time! The six of us need to endure for as long as we can, to endure until the Darcian Dynasty's Angel arrives! Once we sign our agreement, then we will have succeeded. Our lives are more important than Dong Ziqi's life! If we go all out and three of us die so that we eventually kill the two of them...when Snowdragon Mountain comes for revenge, they'll come with an entire group of Zifu Disciples. By then, how can the remaining people delay for any longer?"

Truekeep instantly came to his senses.

Killing the enemy was secondary. What really mattered for the Ji clan was to overcome this tribulation.

They had to endure and survive until the Darcian Dynasty's Angel arrived! As for killing the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain, that was a secondary goal. Killing a few extra Zifu Disciples would reduce their future pressure, but if today, they suffered too many losses, then it wouldn't be worth it.

Within the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation, Dong Ziqi was feeling taut and nervous as well. As the saying goes, it is hard for a pair of hands to fight off two pairs. He was faced with the attacks of six Zifu Disciples, each of which was displaying numerous techniques which filled the skies. Just now, he had just barely blocked the attacks of these six. If the Ji clan's forces were to use forbidden arts to go all out...he would be in great danger as well.

"Even if I die, I'll drag them down with me." Dong Ziqi's eyes flashed with wildness.

"Senior apprentice-brother Ziqi." Seated in the lotus position, the ashen-faced Muse suddenly opened his eyes, a look of wild joy within them. "My vines have already extended to beyond the bewildering formation."

Ziqi was stunned, and then he was overjoyed as well. "We can leave?"

If he could live, of course he would rather live than fight to the death.

"I can sense the location of that vine. By following my senses, we can charge straight out." Muse hurriedly rose to his feet. "Senior apprentice-

brother Ziqi, control the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation. We're going to leave."

A green leaf appeared out of nowhere.

The green leaf extended to the size of multiple meters, and Muse and Ziqi stepped atop the leaf. Around them, those eight bloody dragons continued to swim about. Clearly Ziqi was continuously maintaining the Eight Trigrams Blood Dragon Formation.

"Let's go."

Swoosh!

The green leaf began to fly in a strange, zig-zagging manner, occasionally advancing, then retreating, then turning, then retreating, then retreating, then advancing...the movements were completely bizarre. But in truth, this was caused by the disruptions to their sense of direction within the formation. Although it seemed as though they were constantly changing directions, in truth, they were moving towards the outside this entire time.

Whoosh...

Standing atop the leaf, Muse and Ziqi suddenly saw the desolate mountain forests outside.

"We're out."

"We're out. We made it out." Ziqi and Muse both had looks of surprise and joy on their faces. They had been trapped within the bewildering formation and unable to escape, giving their enemies complete control over what to do. That was indeed quite torturous. Now that they had escaped, they naturally felt incomparably jubilant.

"Ji clan!" Ziqi gritted his teeth.

Muse's face was sinister as well. "Three of my fellow disciples have died miserable deaths here. How can we not avenge this great enmity?"

"Ji clan!" Dong Ziqi's voice echoed for hundreds of kilometers. "Just wait for your clan to be annihilated!"

Swoosh!

A green leaf instantly slashed through the skies, quickly disappearing into the horizon.

And as it did, six figures walked out from within the bewildering formation. It was Ninefire and the other five. Ninefire turned to look towards the distant, desolate mountain forests, and he spied several figures from afar. Ninefire said in a booming voice, "Riverbank clan, Bandit clan, Blackfire Sect..." As soon as he spoke, one figure after another flew over at high speed.

"Forgive us for being unable to assist."

"Brother Ninefire, it wasn't appropriate for us to intervene."

One mental voice after another was sent over.

And then, those figures mounted on their magic treasures and flew away, departing. All of the Zifu Disciples of the various powers in the Swallow Mountain region had been drawn here by those earlier elemental waves of energy. Although they weren't able to see the battle between the Ji clan and Snowdragon Mountain, they were able to guess what had happened. In particular, upon hearing Dong Ziqi's final, angry words, they could tell what those words had implied.

"Alas." Watching as those figures left, Ninefire shook his head. "This elemental ore mine has major implications. It will definitely draw the attention of even more Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain. No wonder the Blackfire Sect, the Riverbank clan, and the Bandit clan weren't willing to interfere."

In the Swallow Mountain region, the Ji clan, the Blackfire Sect, the Riverbank clan, and the Bandit clan were allied with each other, and they jointly resisted Snowdragon Mountain and the Ironwood clan.

But what they jointly resisted was the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain! But this elemental ore mine...soon, the Zifu Disciples of the main Snowdragon Mountain Sect would come to attack Swallow Mountain, and when that happened, for them to annihilate the

Blackfire Sect, Riverbank clan, and Bandit clan would be simplicity itself. Of course they didn't dare interfere. No matter how great the benefits might be, they still wouldn't dare to intervene.

"Patriarch, what should we do now?" Truekeep spoke out.

Ning and the others turned to look at their Patriarch.

Ninefire said slowly, "This time, the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain has suffered severe losses. Three of their Zifu Disciples are dead. They will definitely invite their comrades from throughout the region to have them hurry over here. Given the allure of this elemental ore mine, there will be a large group of Zifu Disciples who will attack Swallow Mountain."

Ning and the others all nodded.

"They will definitely invite those nearest Swallow Mountain. Given the speed of Zifu Disciples, they'll probably arrive in just a day or two." Ninefire said. "We have two options."

"The first option."

"We can hide." Ninefire said. "We can make it so that the Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain are unable to find it. We only need to hide for a few days, and wait for the Angel arrives to sign a transfer agreement with us. This is a fairly safe route...but it will thrust the countless clansmen of our Ji clan into mortal danger."

"The Zifu Disciples will be here soon, within just a day or two. In just a short day or two, the hundreds of thousands of tribesmen and clansmen belonging to our Ji clan won't be able to make it far." Ji Ninefire sighed. "When the group of Zifu Disciples of Snowdragon Mountain find that they are unable to locate us, to give vent to their rage, they will massacre our clansmen, or perhaps seize them and sell them off as slaves. This is normal."

The faces of Ning and the others all changed.

Hundreds of thousands of their compatriots!

“The second option.” Ninefire said. “We publicly state that we will be in a certain location, and that we will set up a formation there. We publicly declare...that Snowdragon Mountain can come and kill us there, if they are able to.”

“Snowdragon Mountain is a major sect. Sects like them care deeply about their reputation. If we publicly set up this formation, once their Zifu Disciples come, they will definitely attack the formation full force in an attempt to break it. They won’t lower themselves to go slaughter a group of mortals. If they did so, once the word spread, this would be a great stain on Snowdragon Mountain’s reputation. But if we hide, resulting in them being unable to find the ‘culprits’, they will definitely massacre the people of the Ji clan, so as to demonstrate how the supremacy of Snowdragon Mountain is not to be challenged.

Ning and the others all nodded.

Right.

Major sects cared about their reputation!

If they hid, then those Zifu Disciples would use the excuse of wanting to demonstrate how the supremacy of their sect was not to be challenged, and go massacre the members of the Ji clan, so as to warn others.

But if the Ji clan’s experts stood out and openly proclaimed they would be at a certain location within a formation, then the enemies would no longer be able to go act against those ordinary mortals.

“Everyone, speak. What choice should we make?” Ninefire looked at his clansmen.

Chapter 24: The Stone Room Within the Mine

Misty fog coiling about, Ji Ning just stood there, looking at his five elders. The Patriarch, his father, and the others were all very calm. Clearly, they had already made their decision.

“I am the Patriarch.” Ji Ninefire said very calmly. “For the sake of the Ji clansmen. For the sake of the Ji clan’s reputation! I will stand out and welcome this battle with Snowdragon Mountain!”

Granny Shadow said in her hoarse voice, “I’ve lived nearly four hundred years. Can it be that I, Ji Shadow, am going to hide so as to live for a few more years while watching my clansmen fall into danger? In addition, I feel very happy that I’ll be able to face death with my elder brother.”

“Wherever my mistress is, I shall be there.” The old servant, Ah Xing, actually spoke out, a rare event indeed.

“It’s enough for we three old fellows to be there.” Ninefire smiled.

“Patriarch!” Truekeep spoke out. “I know the limits of my own talent. Even amongst the Zifu Disciples of the Ji clan, I am only average. It’s virtually impossible for me to become a Wanxiang Adept! This battle...is the most critical battle which will determine the fate of my Ji clan. I cannot hide from it.”

Ishwin smiled as well. “Patriarch, you know my situation as well. My Immortal path is shattered. I don’t want to die a silent, meaningless death. I must participate in this battle.”

“The two of you...” Ninefire shook his head.

Ning, hearing this, was stunned.

His Immortal path was shattered?

Didn’t his father always say that his heart was focused on following the Immortal path? Why did that change?

“Father, you said your Immortal path is shattered?” Ning stared at his

father in disbelief.

Ishwin looked at his son, a rather complicated look on his face. “Actually, while adventuring in the Darknorth Sea, I had already broken through to the Zifu Disciple level. Afterwards, when your mother became pregnant with you, I had already reached to the middle Zifu level. I led your mother, wanting to return to Swallow Mountain, but your maternal uncle was worried, so he escorted us back.”

Ning listened intently.

He knew that a calamity had occurred on the way back.

“Afterwards, we met with a disaster.” Ishwin said. “Your mother was badly injured, but your Uncle White led you back. Your uncle and I both executed forbidden arts, using all our might to delay the enemy! During that battle, your uncle died while I was badly injured. Because I used a forbidden art for too long a period of time, the damage done to my Zifu Violet Palace was too great, and my Violet Palace became warped and atrophied, unable to expand again in the future. In other words, it is impossible for me to increase my power. I will forever remain a mid-level Zifu Disciple.”

“Because of the atrophication of my Zifu, I’m only able to draw out a hint of the Ki energy within my Zifu.” Ishwin shook his head. “There’s no way I can ride on a magic treasure with just that tiny strand of Ki! Thus, I focus on my swordplay, with that strand of Ki being the foundation of it. I draw forth the power of the world with every single blow of sword light.”

“But of course.” Ishwin said somberly. “I can still use a forbidden art one more time, forcibly drawing out a large amount of Ki energy from within my Zifu. But given how my Zifu is already warped...there’s no need to repeat what I said earlier. Once I use a forbidden art, most likely within one hour, my Zifu will completely shatter, and I will be transformed into a cripple. In other words...I, your father, can only be a Zifu Disciple for one more time. After one last bout of glory, I will become a cripple.”

Ning was stunned.

No wonder his father’s swordplay was so powerful! No wonder his father

never rode on a ranked magic treasure!

“My Immortal path is shattered. I only have one opportunity to use this forbidden art again.” Ishwin looked at his son. “Previously, I was keeping this opportunity in abeyance for you. I wanted to protect you. I wanted you to hold on to my jade sword, and upon encountering any danger, you would shatter that jade sword, and I would immediately hurry over to you. Even if you encountered a Zifu Disciple, I would have the power to rescue you. For the sake of my son, it would have been worth it.”

Ning’s heart was trembling.

So the truth was...

So the truth was, his father had been planning on this.

“But you no longer need my protection.” Ishwin smiled. “Your mother is dead as well. My Immortal path is shattered. And you are an adult, now. I have nothing holding me back. I will not retreat, this time. This will be the last battle I shall ever fight, and it will also be the most glorious battle of my life. If I die, I would rather die in this battle, die for the sake of the Ji clan!”

Ning stared at his father, at his father’s smile. His father rarely smiled, but the smile on his father’s face was a very relaxed one. Although Ning felt bitter pain in his heart, he didn’t try to dissuade his father.

.....

Of the six, five of the elders were preparing to do battle.

“I...” Just as Ning spoke out.

Ninefire barked, “It’s one thing for us to go risk our lives, but you, Ji Ning! You are the hope of our Ji clan! Your talent is something which our clan has never given birth to before! You must continue to live!”

“Patriarch, I know what you mean.” Ning shook his head. “But I am not willing to hide and just watch as you risk your lives. I am not willing!”

“You...” Ninefire said, enraged.

“But Patriarch, don’t worry. I’m not a brash and mindless brute. If I see

that the situation is unsalvageable, I will immediately leave and save my own life.” Ning looked at the Patriarch. “I have a Traceless Talisman. I imagine, Patriarch, you know how powerful the Traceless Talisman is. Once I activate it, I will instantly be able to travel to a distance of up to ten thousand kilometers.” Ever since his mother had died, his father had given the Traceless Talisman to Ning.

Ninefire was stunned.

The Traceless Talisman? Of course he knew that the Ji clan of the West Prefecture had this treasure. He had once desired it, but the Ji clan had its rules which no one could violate.

“Since that’s the case.” Ninefire nodded. “Fine. You can come along with us. But if the situation grows unsalvageable, you must immediately leave.”

And thus, right here, within the desolate mountain forest filled with the fog of the bewildering formation, the six members of the Ji clan made their decision. Together, they would battle against Snowdragon Mountain.

“There are only six of us.” Ninefire was actually filled with a boundless martial spirit. “As for Snowdragon Mountain, after their Swallow Mountain branch suffered such a loss, they will definitely invite some of their fellow disciples from the surrounding branches to come. By then, an entire group of Zifu Disciples will attack us en masse, and perhaps even a Wanxiang Adept might come as well! Fighting them head on is idiocy. What we need to do is to delay. Thus, we must set up multiple layers of formations.”

“Right. Formations. Patriarch, you are the most skilled amongst us in formations.” Truekeep was filled with anticipation as well.”

“I will set up multiple layers of large formations.” Ninefire looked towards the other five. “Leave the formation setting to me. What the rest of you need to do is come up with ideas to improve your own fighting abilities, such as perhaps using some of the supreme guardian treasures of your respective prefectures...”

Everyone nodded.

“Also!”

Ninefire lowered his head, looking into the ground. “Beneath this desolate wilderness, in an area with a circumference of thousands of kilometers, there lies hidden an enormous elemental ore mine! But the strange thing is, prior to this, nobody had ever discovered it. The vein is very close to the surface, yet nobody discovered it. In addition, previously, there had been such a powerful, forceful elemental energy wave.”

“Right.” Ning nodded as well.

Indeed. It had been the elemental energy ripple that had attracted their attention to this place. It was very bizarre.

“Perhaps a strange, incredible treasure has just entered the world.” Ninefire said. “The elemental energy ripple that came prior to this could have been created by the emergence of this unique treasure, which might have caused the surrounding area to transform into an elemental ore mine.”

“Or perhaps an Immortal was training here. When Immortals train, the amount of elemental energy they consume is as vast as an ocean.” Ninefire sighed. “If they train for a long period of time, an elemental ore mine will naturally form.”

Granny Shadow frowned. “Elder Brother, are you saying...?”

Ning and the others all looked at Ninefire.

“I am guessing.” Ninefire’s eyes held a hint of desire. “That this elemental ore mine must have a secret behind its origins. Perhaps it has some treasures within, or some precious items left behind by an Immortal! Even items casually discarded by an Immortal...are enough to allow our Ji clan’s power to increase greatly.”

“Patriarch, are you suggesting...?” Truekeep grew excited as well.

“Treasures?” Ishwin and the others all stared towards the ground.

Ninefire nodded. “Let’s dig into the ground and do an investigation. Perhaps we might find something.”

“Right.”

“Let’s go.”

Each of them felt that the words of the Patriarch were reasonable. That elemental energy ripple from earlier had indeed been bizarre, and it was also strange that this elemental ore mine had never been discovered. Perhaps some treasure was hidden within.

“Ji Ning.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “That protective lotus technique of yours seems to dig very quickly. It’ll be up to you. We’ll follow from behind you.”

Ning nodded. “Fine. I’ll begin, then.”

.....

Rumblerumblerumble...

Ning controlled his Fire-Water Lotus, making it swivel through the ground, constantly digging deeper into it. Those elemental stones were easily broken through, carving out a tunnel. Ning moved quickly and constantly, digging deeper and deeper, while Ninefire and the rest of the five were behind him.

“His speed is so fast.” Truekeep sighed in amazement, following from behind.

“When we started digging, we were fast as well, but after exhausting a large amount of our Ki, we had to begin to slow down. But Ji Ning is completely relying on borrowing the power of nature.” Ninefire had already been able to see through Ning’s Fire-Water Lotus, and that it was formed from natural power.

They continued to go deeper.

“Ji Ning, wherever the quality of the elemental ore is the finest, that is where you should dig.” Ninefire said. “If there are any treasures present, they should be located at wherever the elemental energy is the strongest.”

Ning nodded.

He had noticed as well...that different areas had different quality

elemental stones. Some places only had low-grade elemental stones, while other places had quite a bit of high-grade elemental stones.

“Rumblerumblerumble...” The Fire-Water Lotus drilled down, like a giant dragon swimming through the underground ore deposit, constantly boring in the direction of high-grade stones.

After an hour...

“The majority of stones here are high-grade stones. You can pick them out with ease.”

“This is a precious location.”

“So many high-grade elemental stones.”

Although they knew all along that this was a rich vein, they hadn’t imagined that this elemental ore mine would actually have a location within it with such an abundance of high-grade elemental stones.

“Bang!” Suddenly, an explosive sound.

Ning came to a sudden halt, causing Ninefire and the other four behind Ning to come to a startled halt as well.

“What is it?” Ninefire asked hurriedly.

“In front of me, there is a very tough, unyielding stone. My Fire-Water Lotus is actually unable to drill through.” Ning said, puzzled. The power of his Fire-Water Lotus was now tremendous, and generally speaking, even forged weapons would be shattered by it, to say nothing of rocks. “It really is strange.”

Rumblerumblerumble...

The Fire-Water Lotus quickly swept away the nearby stones, allowing Ning to get a good look at what was in front of him; a very flat, rocky surface.

“This is...?” Ning was puzzled. Ninefire, Ishwin, and the others were puzzled as well.

Ning continued to control his Fire-Water Lotus to scatter aside the

surrounding elemental stones...and soon, what appeared before their eyes was part of an enormous stone room, with a door in front of it.

“This...this...”

“This is a stone room! Manmade! Even Ji Ning’s Fire-Water Lotus is unable to break through it. This is no ordinary stone room; it must have been left behind by an Immortal.”

The members of the Ji clan all revealed looks of wild joy on their faces.

Deep within the ground, more than a hundred kilometers down, in the heart of this elemental ore mine, they had discovered a stone room. Who amongst them would believe that it was a common room?

“Ji Ning, don’t go too close. Beware of restrictive spells.” Ninefire said. “Keep away from it, and control your magic treasures to open the stone door at a distance.”

“Right.” Ning nodded.

All of them hurriedly retreated, while Ning directly controlled a sword-type magic treasure, sending it flying outwards and pushing at the stone door. Rumble...the stone door slowly turned, revealing an entrance. Instantly, an incomparably thick surge of elemental essence spurted out from within that stone room, causing Ning and the rest of them to feel incredibly comfortable.

“There must be Immortal treasures within.” Ninefire called out frantically.

Chapter 25: Establishing the Zifu

The dense elemental aura caused Ning to take a deep breath. He could feel the Xiantian Ki in his dantian rumble as it continuously grew. “What pure, dense elemental energy. The elemental energy released just by opening the door to this stone room is already so dense...then what about inside the room?”

“Don’t go in rashly. There might be danger within.” Ji Ninefire hurriedly warned. “I’ll release a bug to go investigate inside.”

Ninefire opened his mouth, and a black wasp immediately flew out, quickly flying through the stone door and darting into the stone room. After a span of time of ten breaths, the black wasp flew back out, and Ninefire swallowed it once more into his body.

“How is it?”

Each of them looked at Patriarch Ninefire, who just laughed. “I’ve finished my investigation. There’s no danger at all within. Come, let’s go take a look! You follow behind me. Even if there are dangers hidden within the stone room that I could not detect, I will be the first to die. Ji Ning, you walk in the very back!”

“Right. Ji Ning needs to stay in the back.” Each of them looked towards Ning.

There was nothing Ning could do. He didn’t argue, instead just docilely following from behind. Ninefire and Granny Shadow were in the very front, and as soon as they entered, the sound of their delighted, amazed cries rang out. “What a treasure! What a treasure!” “This place definitely was a place where an Immortal trained. Definitely!”

Ning, hearing this, had an itchy feeling in his heart. What exactly was inside?

“You can all come in. I’ve swept it with my Ki. There’s no danger.” Ninefire said.

Immediately, everyone entered, and even Ning hurriedly followed them

inside.

“What thick elemental energy.” This was the first thing Ning sensed when he entered; that there was an incomparably dense, natural elemental energy in this place, causing all of the pores of his body to swell open and welcome it, absorbing as much of it as they could. The entire room seemed to be filled with a visible, verdant aura of life energy. This was a natural color which would appear once natural elemental energy reached a certain density.

“Ji Ning, shut the stone door. Don’t let this elemental energy leak out. This stone room is rather special. Once the door is shut, the elemental energy won’t leak out.” Ninefire said.

“Yes.” Ning understood this as well. Prior to this, it was only when he had pushed the stone door open that the elemental energy had leaked out. Rumble...the stone door shut.

Ning looked curiously in detail at his surroundings.

This room was thirty meters in diameter. There was even a door nearby; there should be other rooms within as well.

“Look.” Ninefire pointed at a large pool, which was filled with a layer of thin green liquid. The green liquid was slowly swirling, filled with boundless life energy. The reason why the air here was emanating that incomparably dense elemental energy was because the liquid was releasing it into the air.

“I am absolutely certain.” Ninefire said confidently. “That it definitely was an Immortal in training who caused this elemental ore mine to be formed. He intentionally set down a formation to summon a boundless amount of natural elemental energy from the surrounding area. After many years of accumulated energy, the elemental ore mine was formed. But to an Immortal, what is necessary isn’t elemental stones, but rather, this...”

Ninefire pointed at the water pool filled with the layer of green liquid, incomparably certain. “Liquefied elemental essence! This is the true essence of natural elemental energy, extremely pure liquefied elemental

essence!”

Ning and the others held their breaths.

Liquefied elemental essence?

If one described the elemental energy contained within high-grade elemental stones as ‘very pure’ and as being not very burdensome to the body, and capable of increasing training speed tenfold, then liquefied elemental essence...was the purest form of elemental essence, which placed no strain on the body whatsoever. One could completely absorb and convert it within a short period of time.

For example, some Immortals, after being reincarnated, would lose their memories and become ordinary mortals. Once they regained their memories, however, based on the insights they had gained into the heavenly Dao, as well as the power of their souls, they could for example obtain and make use of a legendary ‘Nine Cycles Golden Pill’, which contained an ocean’s worth of elemental energy, and which also placed no burden on the body, allowing one to quickly absorb it all within a short period of time.

Once a reincarnated Immortal regained his memory and swallowed a ‘Nine Cycles Golden Pill’, then just by relying on the natural elemental energy contained within the pill...he would be able to once again become an Immortal within a single day!

To improve in one’s training?

Strengthen one’s soul! One’s level of understanding! One’s techniques! Elemental energy! Not a single one of these four could be lacking! As for reincarnated Immortals, it was because they possessed the first three already, which was why they could rely on a single ‘Nine Cycles Golden Pill’ to instantly become an Immortal. If they didn’t have the Nine Cycles Golden Pill, even reincarnated Immortals would have to slowly, step by step train and rise in power. As for ordinary mortals, if they swallowed a ‘Nine Cycles Golden Pill’, they would be instantly exploded by the sea of elemental energy the pill contained!

The Nine Cycles Golden Pill...was the stuff of legends.

But Ning had read about liquefied elemental essence in books before. Liquefied elemental essence, in sufficient quantities, could be comparable to a Nine Cycles Golden Pill.

“The Immortal who trained here...” Ninefire said excitedly. “He definitely had accumulated a large amount of liquefied elemental essence here. Because of his training, he had already used up the vast majority of it, leaving behind only this thin layer. But even just this thin layer...is perhaps comparable to the entire wealth of our Ji clan. And in addition, even if our Ji clan had the wealth to buy something like this, we still wouldn’t be able to.”

Everyone present was excited.

They all understood that liquefied elemental essence would allow a person to avoid spending a long period of time in absorbing and refining energy! Thus, it had long ago been monopolized by large sects and large clans. They might gift it to some truly monstrous talents, or some top-tier experts, making it so that they wouldn’t have to waste too much time in slowly refining elemental energy. How could the Ji clan possibly be able to buy something like this?”

“Patriarch, with this, will you be able to break through to the Wanxiang Adept stage?” Ning asked hurriedly.

“Our Ji clan’s training methods are fairly poor.” Ninefire shook his head. “In theory, I can break through, but in reality, our Ji clan, from past to present, has never produced a single Wanxiang Adept! I’ve trained for nearly four centuries now. If it were possible for me to become a Wanxiang Adept, I would’ve broken through long ago. This liquefied elemental essence is useless to me, or for your Granny Shadow. But for you, Ji Ning, it has quite a bit of use!”

“Right. Ji Ning, you are the most suitable person for using it.” Granny Shadow looked at Ning as well, her eyes filled with expectation. “You are such a genius. In truth, for you to have been born to our Ji clan has resulted in the Ji clan holding you back. You have to waste so much time in slowly accumulating elemental Ki energy. If you were born within some

top-tier clans, you would train much more quickly than you have thus far.”

“Ji Ning, use it.” Ishwin said as well. “Don’t be hesitant and shy. I know exactly what level you are on. In terms of insight, most likely all of us are at least a level below you. By relying on this liquefied elemental essence, you absolutely can reach a higher level.”

“Right.” Truekeep, Ninefire, and the others all looked eagerly towards Ning.

Ning felt a warm feeling in his heart.

Such a treasure...

And yet, they were all leaving it for him.

“Patriarch, I won’t be shy then.” Ning said directly. “I’ll immediately take the liquefied elemental essence and begin to train.” It would be hard for him to break through as a Fiendgod Body Refiner, and even if he wanted to try, he needed the power of the Sun and the Moon...and so, this liquefied elemental essence was more suited for him in training as a Ki Refiner. He had reached the necessary level of insight long ago; he absolutely could establish his Zifu foundation!

“Good.” Ninefire and the others were filled with excitement and anticipation. To them, this liquefied elemental essence would only be able to raise their power by a limited amount. But to the most monstrously talented member of the Ji clan, Ji Ning...it would most likely increase his power tremendously.

“I’ll go look at the other rooms and see if there’s anything else we can use.” Ninefire said hurriedly.

There was the other room nearby.

In that room, there was only a stone bed, a stone chair, and a stone table. Nothing else.

“It seems this place was just the place where the Immortal shut himself in for training, while this other room was the study where the Immortal would rest and flip through Immortal manuals.” Ninefire said. “The other

room is a room where the Immortal actually trained.”

“There’s nothing else.”

“No other treasures.”

Ishwin and the others took a careful look as well, but this stone room just had a primary room and a side room. It was very simple and plain, and one could tell at a glance that there was nothing else here. They used their Ki energy to sweep it as well, but couldn’t find any hiding places for treasures.

“Let’s go.” Ninefire and the others returned to the main room. They looked at Ning, then instructed, “Ji Ning, you remain here and train. Remember, shut the stone door. There’s a secret mechanism above the door. Once you shut the door, no one outside will be able to open it. We’ll wait aboveground for you.”

“Fine.” Ning nodded.

Ninefire and the others all quickly left, leaving only Ning behind in the stone room. Ning pushed the door shut, locking it in place.

Training was something very important. One had to be very careful. Otherwise, if one was disturbed at an important point during the training, it would be very dangerous.

“This time...I should be able to establish my Zifu.” Ning looked at the pool, filled with that spiritual liquefied elemental essence. He didn’t hesitate any further, immediately sitting down next to the pool and immediately activating his [Water Element Art] technique. The [Water Element Art], although a very basic technique, was one in which establishing the Zifu was simple.

However, after establishing his Zifu, Ning needed to change to a different type of Ki Refining technique. Otherwise, just by relying on this poor technique, it would be quite difficult for him to become a Wanxiang Adept. In theory, it was possible, but only in theory. As for becoming a Primal Daoist? Even in theory, it was impossible!

However, Ning wasn’t impatient. He primarily trained as a Fiendgod

Body Refiner, after all. In the future, he would also leave Swallow Mountain. Naturally, he would be able to acquire a higher level technique.

“Rumble...” Ning activated the [Water Element Art], and immediately began to absorb the elemental energy nearby. The elemental energy within this stone room was simply too dense, and it constantly condensed into Ki.

Ning opened his mouth.

Absorb!

Immediately, part of the liquefied elemental essence within the pool flew up into the air. Controlled by Ning’s divine will, the essence flew straight into Ning’s mouth and entered his body. As soon as the liquefied elemental essence entered his body...it instantly transformed into elemental energy. The incomparably pure elemental energy constantly circulated within his dantian, transforming directly into elemental Ki energy. It was successful at a single go! It didn’t place any stress on his body at all. Ning could constantly, unceaselessly continue to absorb and transform this energy.

“Rumble...” The green water-type Ki in his dantian began to surge about like endless, vast waves, wildly swirling and constantly accumulating!

“Again.” Ning once more opened his mouth, drawing some liquefied elemental essence into his body.

A massive wave of energy arose within his dantian. His elemental Ki energy, which originally needed a long period of time to slowly accumulate, quickly reached a limit. Boundless amounts of elemental energy swirled ferociously in his dantian under great pressure, as though the space in his dantian was too small, unable to contain so much elemental energy.

Rumble...

Instantly, something happened, like when Pangu split open the primordial chaos and created the heavens and the earth! The chaotic, monocolored dantian suddenly exploded!

In the area around Ning, who had been quietly seated in the lotus

position by the side of the pool, a large amount of watery mist suddenly arose out of nowhere. In this moment, he could so very clearly sense the 'Dao', but soon afterwards, the feeling disappearing.

"I established my Zifu! Now that my Zifu is established, I have my foundation for continuing my training as an Immortal practitioner." Ning said softly to himself.

Within his body, in the location where the dantian had previously been.

This was now a vast, empty, boundless space. This vast, empty space contained a limitless amount of violet Ki which filled it. This strange location, quasi-real and quasi-imaginary, was the Violet Palace! Every single person, upon establishing their Zifu Violet Palace, would have the same thing. However, as to what sort of level a person would be able to train to in the future, that depended on each person's destiny and techniques.

"Absorb!" Ning opened his mouth, and more liquefied elemental essence from the watery pool into Ning's body like water.

The vast, spread-out space with violet Ki instantly had the first drop of elemental Ki formed from it. Soon, a large amount of Ki was constantly coalescing. Within this boundless, empty, illusory void, a small pool began to form, which quickly transformed into a small pond...elemental Ki continued to solidify and accumulate, and the size of the pond continued to grow as well...

Chapter 26: Stormclouds Approaching

Ji Ning was seated next to the pool of water in the lotus position. His aura was like that of savage waves crashing down. He continued to open his mouth, absorbing the liquefied soul essence within the pool, causing that layer of liquefied essence to quickly deplete.

But suddenly, Ning shut his mouth.

“Whew.”

A smile on his face, Ning opened his eyes. He glanced at the green, liquefied soul essence in the pool. “It let me break through as a peak Xiantian expert, allowing me to establish my Zifu, then solidify my base as an early Zifu Disciple. It has saved me at least a year or two of effort. I used up a third of the liquefied essence!”

In a short period of time, just long enough to boil a pot of tea, not only had he established his Zifu, he had also solidified his base. Even Ning, at his astonishing rate of improvement, would have needed a year or two.

If I use the remaining two thirds of liquefied essence to train, I might be able to reach the mid-stage as a Zifu Disciple.” Ning understood that since he had already stabilized his base as an early Zifu Disciple, by relying on the remaining liquefied essence, he absolutely had the possibility of breaking through again, but if he really were to rely on the [Water Element Art] to train to the mid-stage as a Zifu Disciple, his future Ki Refining path would become difficult.

After all, the [Water Element Art] was a very low-class technique. It was fine to use it to establish a Zifu, because every person’s Zifu was the same. But if Ning was to use it to break through to the middle of the Zifu level? There would be a very negative effect on the purity of his elemental energy. This single wrong step would be something which he would be unable to undo in the future. In the future, it would become ten times or a hundred times more difficult for him to become a Wanxiang Adept.

“I’ve already made a large leap forward and become a Zifu Disciple! Even if I break through to become a mid-stage Zifu Disciple, the amount

of benefit I would see in terms of power would be limited.” Ning pondered to himself. Leaping to a new level was a qualitative transformation! But a small leap within the same level didn’t have that much of an impact on his power.

Xiantian lifeforms could dominate Houtiane experts.

Zifu Disciples could dominate Xiantian lifeforms!

Even an early Zifu Disciple could still dominate most peak Xiantian lifeforms. This was a qualitative difference. To battle someone at a higher level? Difficult!

But if an early Zifu Disciple were to battle a mid-stage Zifu Disciple...it would be hard to say who the victor was. This sort of small gap within the same level didn’t result in huge differences in strength.

“Even if I use up the remaining liquid, the amount of power I would gain would be limited, and it would destroy my future path. Not worth it.” With a flip of his hand, Ning made a talisman appear, which had a Fiendgod word on it; ‘Right’. This was the control talisman for the Aquatic Manor. Ning stared at it, an eager light flickering in his eyes. “Although I’ve established my Zifu, and I am confident that if I were to meet Dong Ziqi again, I would be able to suppress him and perhaps even kill him...this time, I will have to face not just Dong Ziqi by himself, but an entire group of Snowdragon Mountain experts.”

“I hope this Aquatic Manor...will allow my power to rise to a new level.”

“Given that this Aquatic Manor was able to produce the likes of the Immortal Juhua, it should be extraordinary.” Ning said eagerly. A drop of green elemental Ki passed from his hand into the talisman, quickly binding it.

A surge of ancient-feeling power seemed to awaken, causing Ning to feel the desire to worship it from the depths of his heart.

“What a fellow.” Ningn stared at the talisman. “I really wonder who the first master of the Aquatic Manor was.”

“Let’s go.”

Ning immediately arose, while at the same time, with a flip of his hand, he produced a palm-sized jade bottle. This was an unranked magic treasure. Although it was the size of his palm, it was able to contain within it thousands of kilograms of fine wine. Ning had quite a few storage-type magic treasures like this one. For example, when Ning had undergone the Fiendgod Bloodforging process in the Aquatic Manor, he had used one such gourd to contain a thousand kilograms of blood.

“Go in.” Ning stared at the liquefied elemental essence in the pool. Summoning his divine will, ripple, ripple...the liquefied essence rose into the air, passing through the neck of the jade bottle. Every single drop was put in, leaving not a single drop remaining.

“I wonder which Immortal left behind this stone room.” Ning, before leaving, took a final glance around the room. “It has caused such a calamity to my Ji clan, but it also allowed me to establish my Zifu in advance.”

Ning understood in his heart that this wasn't the fault of that Immortal; if he had to blame someone, he could only blame the Ji clan for being too weak.

“Whoosh!”

He left the stone room. Ning then used his Fire-Water Lotus, which swiveled about him, carving a path straight out from within this elemental ore mine. He quickly charged upwards at a constant pace. Ning knew that it would take some time for him to charge a hundred kilometers upwards, and so two magic treasures appeared in his hands; one was a palm-sized flying boat magic treasure, while the other was a pair of black wing-type magic treasures.

The flying boat had belonged to Bei Zishan, while the black wings had belonged to Ju San. They were both ranked magic treasures.

“Now that I've reached the Zifu level! I am able to use these ranked magic treasures.” Ning understood that when reaching a new level, one benefit was a qualitative improvement to his personal strength, while another benefit was that the type of magic treasures he could use had also

risen. These two benefits, combined, made it so that Zifu Disciples could absolutely dominate Xiantian lifeforms.

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Boom!

A petal of the Fire-Water Lotus burst forth from the ground, with Ning behind it.

“Ji Ning.” In the distance were Ji Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others. They had long since dispersed and recollected the surrounding bewildering formation, and the sight of the desolate mountain forests had returned. Only, in parts of the forest, the traces of the earlier battle could still be seen.

“Patriarch. Father.” Ning hurriedly walked over.

“You came out quite quickly. We just arrived on the surface not long ago.” Ninefire and the other four walked over, laughing. “Truekeep just emerged moments ago as well.”

Ning thought about it. He had been in training for as much time as it takes to brew a pot of tea; the amount of time he had spent boring through the ground had actually been greater than that. The Patriarch and the others had most likely had to spend more time boring through the ground than he did...and so, doing the math, it seemed as though they probably really did emerge at roughly the same time.

“Right, Ji Ning.” Ninefire asked. “Prior to this, when you killed Ju San. What magic treasures did you acquire?”

“Quite a few.” Ning said.

The nearby Grany Shadow explained in detail, “We need to do an accounting of these treasures, to see who they are most useful for. This is the easiest way to put them to good use.”

Ning nodded. “Jusan had one flying transportation magic treasure, one storage magic treasure, one protective magic treasure, one magic greataxe, and a pair of magic wings! The magic wings are useful to me, but the

others are not.” Ning had already acquired a ranked storage magic treasure, a transportation magic treasure, and a protective magic treasure from Bei Zishan. Thus, only this pair of ranked wing-type magic treasures was useful for him.

“What do you need?” Ninefire looked at Ning.

“Swords!” Ning said. “I only need ranked flying swords. Other things are useless to me. The more ranked flying swords, the better.”

His two sources of combat power were close quarters combat and the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation].

In particular, now that he had established his Zifu, the power of his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] had naturally grown only greater. However, if he continued to use unranked swords...his power would most likely only rise by one or two levels. If, however, he was able to completely exchange them for ranked swords, Ning felt that he would probably be able to give even a Wanxiang Adept a good fight.

“Ranked flying swords? The more the better?” Ninefire, Granny Shadow, the old servant Ah Xing, and Ishwin all repeated softly, then offered one or two flying swords each.

“All together, we have five flying swords that we don’t need for now.” Ninefire looked at Ning. “Is it enough?”

Ning was rather disappointed.

Five?

Useless.

His [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] required at least nine swords to be used together in order to work and creation a formation base! And nine formations bases were required for each [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] formation! In other words, the smallest unit, the ‘formation base’, required at least nine ranked swords. And, to make his [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] truly transform in power, he needed at least eighty one ranked flying swords. Only by using them as the foundation would the power of the other, unranked swords become truly explosive.

But of course, the ideal solution would be to only use ranked flying swords...

According to Ning's calculations, if he only used ranked flying swords, he would only be able to use the third level of the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation]. But the power of it would be incomparably greater than before! Quality was even more important than quantity!

"How many do you need?" Ninefire asked.

"I need seven ranked flying swords. The more, the better. If I had several hundred, it would be even better." Ning laughed. Sword-type magic treasures were very common; Ning had acquired a pair of ranked flying swords from Bei Zishan alone. If they could come up with another seven, then Ning would have nine in total, enough for a single, smallest unit 'formation base'. With this formation base as the core, the power of the entire [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation] would double or triple!

"Several hundred?" Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and the others were all shocked. However, when they thought back to the scene of Ning utilizing the [Lesser Thousand Swords Formation], they realized that he did indeed have seven hundred plus flying swords swirling around him. It seemed as though Ning really did indeed need a large number of flying swords. But several hundred ranked magic treasures? Even if the entire Ji clan bankrupted itself, it wouldn't be able to afford it.

"We'll strive to help you come up with seven more swords." Ninefire said, then changed the subject. "Snowdragon Mountain will publicize this to their comrades. Most likely, they will come for battle in a day or two. Before this, you can all go back and pick up any treasures that you need or take care of any matters that need addressing. Afterwards, we will regroup here."

"Let's go."

Swoosh!

Ninefire, Granny Shadow, and Ah Xing mounted an enormous wine gourd, quickly disappearing into the horizon, leaving behind only Ning and his father.

Ning understood that this was rather like taking care of one's post-mortem affairs.

"Father, will you return to West Prefecture City?" Ning looked at his father.

"No. To Serpentwing Lake." Ishwin shook his head. "I want to visit Little White. The two of us are like brothers who have shared life and death together. No matter what, I have to see him again." Ishwin had stayed for five years at Serpentwing Lake, and the Whitewater Hound had stayed with him this entire time.

"Uncle White?" Ning nodded gently.

The Godbeast 'Whitewater Hound' had an extremely close relationship Ning's father. They had adventured together to as far as the Darknorth Sea. The time they had spent together was even longer than the time Ning's father and mother had spent together. Indeed, they really were lifelong brothers.

"Let's go." A flying boat appeared beneath Ning's feet, and Ishwin mounted it as well.

Whoosh!

The flying boat instantly rose into the air, quickly passing through the skies and into the clouds...

Swallow Mountain had a total of ten Darcian commandery cities. Snowdragon Mountain had three of them, which were similar to the Darcian commandery city the Ji clan controlled, the 'City of Ten Thousand Swords'. As soon as Dong Ziqi had invaded Swallow Mountain, he had given the name of the city he had taken over the name of 'Snowdragon City', so as to let everyone know that this was a branch of Snowdragon Mountain!

Although afterwards, they had taken over two more commandery cities, the heart of this branch of Snowdragon Mountain remained in Snowdragon City.

"Where are they? Where are the others?"

In the air above Snowdragon Mountain, three figures stood there atop a flying screen, staring into the distance as a green leaf hurtled through the air, with Dong Ziqi and Muse standing atop it.

“Where are the other three? All dead?” These three figures asked frantically. The three of them were the three other Zifu Disciples of the Swallow Mountain branch of Snowdragon Mountain. They were of the ‘Ju’ clan and the ‘Dong’ clan. Earlier, the Zifu Disciple belonging to the Ju clan, Ju Nianxiong, had seen that his nephew’s life-talisman had shattered, and so he had hurried over to Snowdragon Mountain. The two elders of the Dong clan were terrified upon hearing this, knowing that something must have gone wrong.

But they didn’t expect that not only had Ju San died, even the He siblings had died.

“They died. My three fellow disciples all died.” Dong Ziqi gritted his teeth. “It was the Ji clan. They set up a formation early on, then suddenly attacked, causing us to be caught offguard. My three fellow disciples were ganged upon and killed one by one. With the He siblings dead, most likely that official writ was taken away as well.

Three commandery cities. They were split up between the Dong clan, the He clan, and the Ju clan. One of the official writs had been carried by the He siblings.

“The Ji clan is asking for death!” Ju Nianxiong’s eyes were bloodshot.

The nearby Muse said in a cold voice, “This time, due to the elemental ripples, we went to go investigate. We discovered that there was an enormous elemental ore mine within the Ji clan’s territory, with a large number of high-grade elemental stones. The entire quarry has a circumference of four thousand kilometers and a depth of three hundred kilometers.

“What!”

Nianxiong and the two elders of the Dong clan were badly startled.

“The Ji clan wasn’t willing to hand it over, so we ended up in a battle.”

Ziqi forced the words out.

The shorter of the two elders of the Dong clan howled in a furious voice, “The main sect desperately needs an enormous elemental ore mine such as this! If we offer it to the main sect...this will be a great merit for us. The Ji clan actually dares to oppose Snowdragon Mountain? Then we’ll destroy the Ji clan, we’ll annihilate them all!!!”

“Of course we’ll annihilate their clan!” Ziqi’s eyes flashed with a cold light. “But what I fear the most is that the Ji clan will sign a transfer agreement with the Darcian Dynasty.”

The two Dong elders and Ju Nianxiong both paused. If a transfer agreement truly was signed, then even Snowdragon Mountain wouldn’t dare to interfere. Challenge the Darcian Dynasty? Did they want to die?

“But the Ji clan needs to first make the report, then await the arrival of the Angel of the Darcian Dynasty. It will take at least three days. If we can do our best to delay, we can delay for a period of time.” Ziqi said hurriedly. “So we have to hurry. We have to invite our comrades and have them arrive at Swallow Mountain as fast as possible, so that we can annihilate the Ji clan together.”

“Right.” Everyone nodded.

The Ji clan had killed three of their Zifu Disciples, leaving them only five. If they went and fought all out, even if they won, most likely most of them would die. No matter how great the merit they rendered would be, they had to be alive to win plaudits for it.

“The four of you, go invite the various Snowdragon Mountain branches nearest to us.” Ziqi said. “I myself will head to Swallow Mountain City to meet with the garrison general, and ask him to delay as long as possible.”

“Alright.” The four nodded.

“Invite a few dozen comrades. By then, with dozens of us together...we will utterly crush and annihilate the Ji clan with ease.” Ziqi said. “There’s virtually no danger when we join together into a group, and everyone will have a share of the glory. Those comrades will definitely come.”

“Fine.”

“Then we’ll go make a trip.”

Soon, the arrangements and travel plans were made. The other four Zifu Disciples headed separately in four different directions to invite their fellow sectmates, while Dong Ziqi headed to Swallow Mountain City.

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The vast Serpentwing Lake.

A flying boat descended at high speed from the skies, landing at one corner of Brightheart Island. This was the place where Ning’s father lived. The only thing here was a quite, secluded residence. There weren’t even any servants present, just a large, snow-white dog which lay there.

The Whitewater Hound suddenly raised his head as the flying boat descended at high speed.

“Uncle White.” Ning looked at the Whitewater Hound, feeling a surge of emotion as well. First, Ning knew that this Uncle White and his father were brothers that had fought together and risked their lives together, and that Ning’s mother and Ning himself had both been saved by Uncle White. And second, that year when gone outside of West Prefecture City every day to train archery, it had been Uncle White who had stood guard the entire time.

He watched as his father and Uncle White moved towards each other. Although Uncle White was incapable of speech, the master-servant bond allowed spiritual communication at a close distance.

Ning quietly left as well.

Very shortly.

Ning returned to his own residence, entering the quiet room which he used for training. He immediately sealed the room off. Earlier, while flying over Serpentwing Lake, Ning had already sensed the Aquatic Manor! It was just as the old black bull had said; once he bound the control talisman, he would be able to sense and directly enter the Aquatic Manor.

“During this battle, I saw that although my power was great, it was still far from being sufficient. I hope that this ancient Aquatic Manor will be useful and be able to improve my power greatly.” Ning was filled with hope and expectations.

“Let’s go in.” Ning willed it, and instantly, an enormous illusion of a grizzly head appeared in the quiet room. The enormous grizzly head opened its illusory maw, swallowing Ning with one gulp.

Ning disappeared from within the quiet room.

Credits

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